

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ETHNICITY

**Beyond
'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'**

**Edited by
Hans Vermeulen
& Cora Govers**

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**Second
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edited by
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Het Spinhuis

Acknowledgements

The conference 'THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ETHNICITY. A CRITICAL REVIEW' would not have been possible without the financial support of: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture, Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences, Municipality of Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam (UvA), Free University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences UvA, Netherlands Association for Social and Cultural Sciences, the British Council, Department of Anthropology (UvA), Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES), Netherlands Universities Institute for Coordination of Research in Social Sciences (SISWO). For their generous help and assistance we thank anthropology students and numerous people of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam and the Free University of Amsterdam, IMES and SISWO.

Fourth Printing, April 2000

Distribution outside The Netherlands:

MARTINUS NIJHOFF International
2501 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

CIP-DATA KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK DEN HAAG

Anthropology

The anthropology of ethnicity. Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" /

Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers (eds). - Amsterdam : Het Spinhuis. - With ref.

ISBN 90-73052-97-1

Subject headings: anthropology / ethnicity.

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Text-editing by Jonathan Fletcher

Lay-out and typesetting by René de Ree and Heleen Ronden

Cover design by Jos Hendrix

Printed and bound in The Netherlands.

HET SPINHUIS Publishers

Oudezijds Achterburgwal 185, 1012 DK Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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Introduction

Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers

The four lectures published in this volume were delivered at the conference on *The anthropology of ethnicity* held in December 1993 in Amsterdam. The main aim of the conference was critically to review the developments within the field since the publication of Barth's *Ethnic groups and boundaries* in 1969, over a period, thus, of almost twenty-five years. As organizers of the conference, we preferred to give participants the greatest possible freedom to address those issues they considered most important for the development of the field. The present volume can, nevertheless, be read as a tribute to and critical reflection on Barth's work on ethnicity; this confirms its importance in a perhaps even more convincing way.

Notwithstanding the diverse interpretations of Barth's introduction to *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, there is little doubt that its central tenets were clearly formulated and still stand. This core can be formulated in the following three statements: (1) ethnicity is a form of social organization; this implies that (2) 'the critical focus for investigation becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group rather than the cultural stuff that it encloses' (1969:15); the critical feature of ethnic groups is (3) the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others. All four authors seem to agree that these insights continue to be valid; according to Verdery they have even gained a new relevance.

Both Barth's and Verdery's articles are organized around the question of what is still useful in Barth's work on ethnicity and where new directions should be taken. Cohen and Roosens also start from Barth's work, but they direct their attention to two major issues

– aspects in the study of ethnicity which they feel Barth has neglected. Cohen places the study of ethnicity in the broader field of the study of collective and individual consciousness, Roosens argues that Barth's boundary metaphor is very useful in the study of ethnicity, but should be supplemented by the kinship metaphor.

In this introduction we will discuss some of the new directions in the study of ethnicity. First, we will devote attention to the renewed interest in the central issue of the relation between ethnicity and culture. Then we will discuss three other connections, relating ethnicity to the individual, to nationalism and the state, and to the issue of social responsibility.

Ethnicity and culture

It was not before the 1960's that ethnicity was validated as a separate and independent concept in the social sciences (see e.g. Glazer & Moynihan 1975; Chapman et al. 1989). The new prominence of the concept was related to broader developments, such as the new ethnic movements and anti-colonial struggles, the growing criticism of structural functionalism and, in particular, to what Cohen calls the unmasking of the rhetoric of assimilation. The notion of ethnicity pushed to a more marginal status the concepts of assimilation and acculturation, without, however, replacing them altogether.

Though many other social scientists played a role in these changes (see e.g. Eriksen 1993), there is little doubt that Barth's introduction to *Ethnic groups and boundaries* holds a special place. More than any other text, it has become the symbolic marker of the changes to which it contributed substantially, and soon was regarded as a classic. Many will agree with Enloe that 'Fredrik Barth has been the social scientist perhaps most responsible for the shift from static to interactional approaches to ethnicity' (1980:235). The shift from a static to an interactional approach was accomplished by differentiating the notion of ethnicity from that of culture. Barth presented ethnicity or ethnic identity as an aspect of social organization, not of culture.

The disentangling of the notions of ethnicity and culture led for some time to a certain neglect of the study of culture and its relation

to ethnicity (Eriksen 1993:92). The contributions to this volume, however, show a new interest in this relation. More and more it is realized that the shift from a static to an interactional approach to ethnicity implies a similar shift in the study of culture. In this sense Barth claims that *Ethnic groups and boundaries* implied a postmodern notion of culture. Before indicating briefly the relation between ethnicity and culture, it is useful to ask the question what distinguishes ethnic identity from other social identities.

Anthropologists have given different answers to this question. A rather idiosyncratic conception is that of Abner Cohen, whose notion of ethnic groups as informal interest groups sharing some patterns of normative behaviour led him to view the stockbrokers of innercity London as an ethnic group (Cohen 1974). A more usual criterion to distinguish ethnic identities from other social identities is found in the way an ethnic community is imagined. Some take as criterion the notion of, or the belief in, a shared culture (e.g. Eriksen 1993:35); others consider an ideology of common descent, substance and/or history as the main differentiating characteristics (see e.g. Wallerstein 1991:78; Wolf 1988). Barth's 1969 essay did not pay much systematic attention to this question.¹ His emphasis on ethnicity as a form of social organization characterized by ascription and self-ascription led some to consider almost any notion of social identity – of opposition between an 'us' and a 'them' – as ethnic. Roosens' critique of Barth's position relates to this issue. Roosens sees the boundary concept as the central element in Barth's notion of ethnicity and argues that, however useful the concept of boundary may be, it does not get at the heart of the matter: boundaries may create identities, but not necessarily *ethnic* identities. In Roosens' view, the boundary metaphor should be supplemented by the kinship metaphor, adding a genealogical dimension.

The relation between ethnicity and culture can, in our opinion, best be viewed as being threefold: ethnicity refers to the consciousness of (ethnic) culture, to the use of culture, and at the same time is part of culture. To start with the last point: Barth defined ethnicity as an element of social organization, but – arguing from Barth – it

may as well be viewed as an element of culture. Boundaries can be viewed in interactional terms, but they can equally convincingly be viewed as 'boundaries of consciousness', to use Cohen's phrase. Ethnic identities are products of classification, ascription and self-ascription and bound up with ideologies of descent. From this point of view the study of ethnicity is related to the study of ideology (Vermeulen 1984) and of cognitive systems (Chapman et al. 1989). In this sense ethnicity is part of culture. It is also meta-cultural in the sense that it is a reflection on what 'our' and 'their' culture is about. Thirdly, ethnicity refers to the 'the subjective, symbolic or emblematic *use*' by 'a group of people (...) of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups' (De Vos 1975:16; italics added).

The conception of ethnicity outlined here entails that ethnicity as an element of social organization implies regulated interaction, and ethnicity as element of culture entails consciousness of difference. Regarding the last dimension, some authors have made a distinction between 'low' and 'high' degrees of consciousness of difference. Under the first condition, cultural differences tend to be marked and interethnic relations relatively stable: people accept differences as given, they hardly reflect on them and there is no pronounced ethnic ideology, let alone an ethnic movement. The opposite extreme occurs where interaction is increasing and where people are losing or fear they will lose their cultural distinctiveness. In the process they 'become aware' of their culture, may start to 'repair' their culture and demand cultural rights. The difference between these two conditions – conceptual extremes of what is in fact a continuum – is indicated among others by the notions of 'existential solidarity' versus 'ethno-centric solidarity' (Patterson 1977:43) and 'old ethnicity' versus 'new' or 'symbolic ethnicity' (Gans 1979). It also relates to Roosens' distinction between 'unreflected culture' and 'reflected culture' (Roosens 1989) and the one made by Borneman between 'nationness' and 'nationalism' referred to by Verdery.

The distinction between old and new ethnicity also relates to the problem of the historicity of the ethnicity concept. Barth's approach

does not restrict the notion of ethnicity to modern conditions, or to specific historical periods.² Another position is taken by those who link the notion of ethnicity to the nation-state or to situations of heightened awareness of difference.³ It seems to us that the relative confusion on this issue results from a lack of anthropologically informed historical research on ethnic or quasi-ethnic phenomena.

The individual, the state and social responsibility

In the articles which follow the authors suggest a number of other directions and issues for future research. These suggestions partly reflect recent developments and partly go beyond them. Some may consider these new interests as a continuation of the changes introduced by Barth; others will see them as a break with some of his views. Both parties may, however, agree with us that they would be impossible without the central tenets of Barth' introduction as formulated before. In what follows we will look very briefly at some of these recent issues.

The first relates to Barth's claim that the introduction to *Ethnic groups and boundaries* implied a postmodern view of culture. Such a view abandons the notion that cultures are clearly bounded, separated and homogeneous entities. It devotes attention to internal disagreement and dispute, and sees cultures not so much in terms of 'sharedness' but in terms of 'the organization of diversity'. It thus problematizes the relation between the collective and the individual. This view also requires a rethinking of the notion of 'society' (e.g. Wolf 1988) and of the notion of ethnic identity itself. If cultures are not clearly delineated, homogeneous entities, how can we expect people to agree on what that culture is, or who they themselves are? The point is taken up by Cohen. He argues that the study of boundaries implies a study of consciousness, which in its turn requires attention to experience and the individual. People differ in the way they imagine the ethnic community. 'The ethnic group is an aggregate of selves, each of whom produces ethnicity for itself', to quote Cohen. In a related but somewhat different way, Verdery points to the relevance of an anthropology of the person, which would have

to pay attention to the historical genesis of the notions of 'person' and 'identity'.

The study of the interrelation between ethnicity, culture, nationalism and the state constitutes another new field of enquiry.⁴ It includes many issues and themes, such as the construction of national identities, the role of the state in creating and sustaining subnational ethnic identities and the effects of globalization. During the last decades there has been an increasing interest in the role of intellectuals in the construction of national identities (e.g. Herzfeld 1982; Verdery 1991). Though ethnic identities are also constructed in the sense of 'made', not 'naturally given', national identities are often constructed in a more literal sense. Especially during periods of intensive nation-building many intellectuals (politicians, historians, folklorists and others) tend to be more or less professionally engaged in the construction of historical and cultural myths of continuity and homogeneity.

Verdery points out that the nation-state, by trying to enforce 'commonality', renders ethnic difference visible. That such difference becomes visible is often the result of a policy which aims at cultural homogenization, but neglects at the same time – or cannot afford – to attack the cultural division of labour. Modern or postmodern states seem more motivated and better equipped to counter such inequality. At the same time they seem more willing to tolerate ethno-cultural differences (Vermeulen & Penninx 1994). Government policy may even promote – intentionally or not – cultural differences and strengthen ethnic boundaries (see e.g. Roosens 1989). Verdery ends her contribution by calling attention to the ideology and active promotion of 'difference' in the United States, where 'difference' refers to distinctions in terms of gender, 'race' and ethnicity. She tries to understand this phenomenon in terms of broader developments, but also warns against it as representing a new essentialism. This brings us to a last point discussed in the articles of this volume: the responsibility of the anthropologist.

In the beginning of this introduction we mentioned the connection between the growing popularity of the notion of ethnicity and

changes in social theories and political developments. That the notion of ethnicity was embraced by many, had to do with a sympathy among many anthropologists with movements fighting racism, colonialism and assimilationist policies. Anthropologists not only sympathised with such movements, but often actively supported them. More recently anthropologists seem to be more hesitant in taking positions and the prevailing feeling – expressed also by Barth – seems to be that we have been often too quick in supporting ethnic movements. Such a new awareness has been promoted by the new – or old? – essentialism inherent in some of the talk about multi-culturalism (see e.g. Ålund & Schierup 1991) as well as by the cruel ethnic conflicts in places like the Balkans and Sri Lanka. The issue of social responsibility is taking also new dimensions since more and more people use 'our' concepts of culture and ethnicity – even though in different ways – to promote their own interests. The relations between scientific and lay notions should be a rewarding topic for future research.

Notes

1. This is understandable from the point of view that Barth defined ethnicity primarily as an aspect of social organization rather than as a matter of consciousness or culture. At least in one place, however, he was somewhat more specific on this point: 'A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background' (1969:13).
2. Cole argues that Barth's ecological model of ethnicity is best suited to analysis of imperial formations (Cole 1981:134). Eriksen criticizes Barth's 'formalist approach' for using a universal, ahistorical notion of ethnicity (1991).
3. A rather specific position is taken by Patterson (1977:35-66). In his view ethnicity precedes the nation-state, but is not universal. He connects it with the origin of the 'kin-hegemonic pristine state'.
4. We will not enter into the intricacies of the interrelations between the former two concepts. Suffice it to say that both within and outside anthropology there are different ways to relate 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism'. Some take the first as the more general concept and consider the second more or less as a special case (see e.g. Eriksen 1993:99-101; Worsley 1984:247). Others do the reverse and start from the notion of nation. So for Fox the study of ethnicity seems to be subsumed under that of 'nationalist ideologies' (Fox 1990). It will be clear that by using the phrase 'the anthropology of ethnicity' we followed the first line of thought.

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Enduring and emerging issues in the analysis of ethnicity

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It is a great pleasure, twenty five years after the publication of *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, to join such a large gathering of colleagues to review current issues in the analysis of ethnicity. During these years the study of ethnicity has burgeoned; its importance has increasingly been recognized in social science; and issues involving ethnicity play a growing, and often tragic, part in public policy, violence and war. We must mobilize the best our discipline can offer of knowledge and insight to address these analytical and human issues, and we need to think sharply and innovatively to have effect on the world around us.

But it is difficult to return to work one did long ago and think innovatively. My personal research strategy has always been, on the contrary, to seek new pastures: new places and new topics, so as to see the world with new and innocent eyes. That is not so easily done when you return to familiar ground.

What *Ethnic groups*... did

Let me start by restating the points from that early work that seem best to have stood the test of time. The approach built mainly on corporate group theory out of British social anthropology, and on the work of Goffman on the definition of the situation in interaction. The empirical strategy my colleagues and I chose was to give particular ethnographic attention to persons who *change* their ethnic identity: a discovery procedure aiming to lay bare the processes involved in the reproduction of ethnic groups. These are methodological steps that remain fruitful.

- We chose to regard ethnic identity as a feature of social organization, rather than a nebulous expression of culture: being patently a question of social groups we declared it to be a matter of the social organization of culture difference, as in the subtitle of the book.
- This means focusing on the boundary and the processes of recruitment, not on the cultural stuff that the boundary encloses. Attention to these processes of boundary maintenance quickly showed that ethnic groups and their features are produced under particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances: they are highly situational, not primordial.
- Furthermore, being matters of identity, ethnic group membership must depend on ascription and self-ascription: only in so far as individuals embrace it, are constrained by it, act on it, and experience it will ethnicity make organizational difference.
- The cultural differences of primary significance for ethnicity are those that people use to mark the distinction, the boundary, and not the analyst's ideas of what is most aboriginal or characteristic in their culture. I overstated this point in the formulation that people's choice of diacritica appeared arbitrary. But I also explored the boundary-constructing effects of cultural standards used to evaluate and judge ethnic co-members, implying that they are 'playing the same game' (Barth 1969:15, 17f., 117-134) – a point that has been too frequently overlooked.
- Finally, I emphasized the entrepreneurial role in ethnic politics: how the mobilization of ethnic groups in collective action is effected by leaders who pursue a political enterprise, and is not a direct expression of the group's cultural ideology, or the popular will.

This perspective goes against much ethnic rhetoric and seemed counter-intuitive and paradoxical, judged by the assumptions about culture that prevailed at the time. It contains, perhaps, one of the first anthropological applications of a more postmodern view of culture. Though we lacked the opaque terminology of present day postmodernism, we certainly argued for what would now be recognized as a constructionist view. Likewise in our view of history: we broke loose

from the idea of history as simply the objective source and cause of ethnicity, and saw it as a synchronic rhetoric – a struggle to appropriate the past, as one might say today.

And this leads to my first point: we should continue to make use of every advance in the analysis and deconstruction of 'culture': rethinking culture provides a useful, no, *necessary* basis for rethinking ethnicity. This must be so: if ethnicity is the social organization of culture difference, we need to transcend habitual conceptions of this thing 'culture'. What we subsume under the concept of culture no doubt has empirical properties which will be relevant to an understanding of ethnicity; but the properties we as analysts falsely impute to culture will produce imperceptiveness in our observations and confusion in our analyses.

If it is true as many have said, that *Ethnic groups and boundaries* revolutionized the debate on the subject, then we can also observe some backsliding in contemporary thought. The basic ideas are such that they are not all that easy to grasp and use; and the people and movements we seek to understand make it more difficult for us by their *own* reifications of these vast social categories constituted as ethnic groups: imagining them, ascribing properties to them, and homogenizing and essentializing them. These reifications have consequences, but not the consequence of simply creating the communities and the properties that are imagined, by the mere act of imagining. I also see the analysis of ethnicity blunted when cast in the fashionable rhetoric of 'we and the other'. Whereas radical cultural alterity plays an important role in much Western thought (Keesing 1994), ethnic relations and boundary constructions in most plural societies are not about strangers, but about adjacent and familiar 'others'. They involve co-residents in encompassing social systems, and lead more often to questions of how 'we' are distinct from 'them', rather than to a hegemonic and unilateral view of 'the other'.

A contemporary perspective

Let us now try to rethink ethnicity from the foundations laid in 1969, but with an emphatically contemporary view of 'culture' (see, for

example, Borofsky 1994). We now realize that global empirical variation in culture is continuous, it does not partition neatly into separable, integrated wholes. In any population we may choose to observe we will also find that it is in flux, it is contradictory and incoherent, and it is differentially distributed on variously positioned persons. These features arise from the very way in which culture is reproduced: though we learn it largely from others as a basis for interpretation and action in the world, it accumulates in each of us as a precipitate of our own experience. This is certainly true of our sense of identity: though we do not invent it ourselves, we can only develop it by acting in the world and interacting with others. So to grasp what a particular ethnic identity is about, the anthropologist must attend to the *experiences* through which it is formed – it is not enough, as one thought with a simpler concept of culture, to make a homogenizing inventory of its manifestations.

To give some substance to our reflections, let us look for a moment at the ethnic category of Pakistanis who have immigrated to Norway, beginning about thirty years ago (cf. Long 1992). They arrived with a roughly shared and distinctive cultural background from Northeast Pakistan, and have come to form a clearly delimited ethnic group in Norwegian society. But allow me to belabour what may seem obvious. We can start with a young man, arriving in Oslo with his distinctive background of experience, his fund of culture. Responding to his new environment his knowledge and skills increase and his values are also modified, as he acquires a competence in coping with the larger society of Norwegians and fellow Pakistanis. His sense of identity is of necessity reconstructed in answer to these experiences: how is he different from the surrounding others, what part of that difference does he embrace and cherish – even when it may prove an impediment in his present situation. He will butt against growing Norwegian stereotypes of Pakistanis which he must handle in his own way, and he will be faced with numerous personal choices in his relations to the growing Pakistani community, divided as it is in attitudes and factions. In brief, his positioning and his fund of culture – of knowledge, skills and values – are singular to him and a product

of his experience, and are in flux; and his ethnic identity, as manifested inside and across the boundary, is constantly evolving.

At some point, he brings his wife to Norway – a person of very different experience and competence than himself, who moves into a life very different from his, and who therefore harvests a very different set of experiences. His commitment to the Pakistani community – forged by others with interests in creating Muslim institutions or as a refuge from an alien society which strains them – is affected by her presence, but their interests in it may be opposed. His intended scenario for when/whether to go back to Pakistan is in flux, and doubtless different from hers. Children are born, who enter into other sectors of Norwegian society through their experiences in school, neighbourhood and the minority community, and accumulate a fund of culture very different from either parent. The elementary point is that each such family unit, though it is a key node of ethnic recruitment, will also be a crucible of cultural difference and contention. Its members are deeply divided in the culture that each commands, parts of which they will share with different circles of others, both inside and outside the ethnic group. Thus we see exemplified precisely those features – flux, and continuity of variation – stressed in the contemporary account of culture.

In this situation we need to ask just what is the culture difference that ethnicity organizes: for when we look closely at this flux of culture in persons, they seem to diverge and blend, rather than reproduce the distinctions that would make for enduring contrastive identities. To model ethnic processes, we thus need to search for processes that sustain relative discontinuities in this flux and thereby provide a basis for ethnic identity. This calls for the steps of (i) observing the variation of culture in the whole, plural population and (ii) identifying the processes that generate, and make salient, major cultural discontinuities within it. Family socialization can no longer – certainly not in a modern Western society – be assumed to be the fount of all knowledge, skills and values, or to provide the only experiential base from which identity is forged.

Symbols of identity

One major impetus to ethnicity arises if people can be made to join in creating the *appearance* of discontinuity by embracing a few neatly contrasting diacritica, rather than the variable and inconstant whole of culture. An imagined community is promoted by making a few such diacritica highly salient and symbolic, that is, by an active construction of a boundary. This will always be joint work done by members of both the contrasting groups, though they are probably differently empowered in their ability to impose and transform the relevant idioms. Though highly contextual and contingent, the selection of such diacritica is far less haphazard than I may have indicated in 1969. In a very suggestive analysis, Tambs-Lyche (n.d.) demonstrates how *scale*, and lifestyle homogeneity within the group, are significant variables influencing the form of these symbols of identity. Whereas the Indian Patidars he studied in England (Tambs-Lyche 1980) could employ the whole *prototype* (of the Patidar businessman and his role) as a symbol of identity, larger and less homogeneous groups must employ more limited metonymies (for example, the Norwegian emphasis on place, arising from the experience of facing a harsh but beloved nature and creating a home in such a marginal environment) to evoke a shared image; while the largest units may have to appeal to specific, historically constructed metaphors and emblems, of fatherlands and flags, to symbolize the claim of shared heritage and identity.

Arenas of convergence

A second major process whereby a degree of discontinuity is created arises where members of a group converge in behaviour and style because of a widely embraced code or value in terms of which they struggle to excel. While maintaining that we must focus on the boundary, rather than the cultural stuff it encloses, I do not mean to prejudge the loci where boundary-affecting processes may arise. To identify Pathan boundary maintenance, I have thus pointed to the role which a particularly demanding code of honour plays in shaping

Pathan identity (Barth 1969:119 and ff.) and promoting convergent efforts within the group and abandonment of identity along its edge.

Caton (1990) provides materials from the highlands of Yemen on a similar cultural focus in his analysis of the role of poetry in constructing a male identity as a member of a Yemeni tribe. Being a tribesman, he says, is not just to be born to a certain descent status – though that is necessary, as is owning land. Nor is it a matter simply of actualizing a tribal code of honour. A far more subtle and multiple set of values is involved, by which a person must excel, or risk losing face. Piety is valued, as are hospitality, autonomy and self-restraint; but tribal repute depends ultimately on the individual's capacity to answer challenges, to perform the heroic deed before an audience of discriminating spectators, if need be with a gun and most conspicuously with improvised poetry. The poetry serves as a form of tournament and supplies an arena for agonistic social performance of great importance and complexity. Caton proceeds with a subtle and rich evocation of this arena, of its poetic structures, and of the production of verse as social and political act – that is, an analysis of expressive culture in the mode that has taken centre stage in anthropology in the decennia since *Ethnic groups...* was written. The particulars of aesthetic expression and cherished identity are thereby laid bare; but obversely, in Caton's analysis, the socially differentiating, boundary-producing aspects of such an arena – of tribesman as against the nonparticipating *Sada* holy families ambiguously higher than them in rank, against *Khaddam* menials below them, and against other and less glorious tribes around them – are backgrounded. For our purposes of analyzing how cultural discontinuities are generated and ethnic processes are given materials to work with, the study none the less provides striking materials. It shows how a complex local institution locks actors into an agonistic tournament that makes participants converge significantly in action and style, creating a shared consciousness within a group, and discontinuity between them and outsiders.

Thus the issue of cultural content *versus* boundary, as it was formulated, unintentionally served to mislead. Yes, it is a question of

analyzing boundary processes, not of enumerating the sum of content, as in an old-fashioned trait list. But locating the bases of such boundary processes is not a question of pacing the limits of a group and observing its markers and the shedding of members. As already shown in the case materials in *Ethnic groups...*, central and culturally valued institutions and activities in an ethnic group may be deeply involved in its boundary maintenance by setting internal processes of convergence into motion; and we need to pay special attention to the factors governing 'individuals' commitments to the kind of personhood implied by specific ethnic identities' (Haaland 1991:158).

Divergent adaptations

Environment and ecology have always provided the main framework in terms of which anthropologists have sought to understand cultural differentiation, and the immediate generation of studies following after *Ethnic groups...* gave much attention to our linkage of ethnicity to the concept of 'niche', and to the theme of resource competition. As an answer to the problem I am addressing here – of how breaks and discontinuities can arise in the continuous variation of culture – one readily sees how an ecological paradigm provides a set of answers. Particular cultural traits may be useful as adaptations to particular environments and modes of subsistence. Thus, groups with different cultural features may co-reside and even diverge culturally, because these differences are adaptive for their respective exploitation of different resources in the same area. Conversely, resource competition between populations with distinguishing cultural features may provide a special impetus to their mobilization in collective action on the basis of shared ethnicity. An early extension of the concept of 'niche' (Barth 1956) to comprise not only features in the natural environment, but also in the human sector of the environment – that is, the opportunities for livelihoods provided by the presence of clientele, markets, etcetera – proved highly fruitful. The perspective still provides a necessary component in the study of plural situations, and has been developed as a sophisticated genre of analyses of competitive ethnic relations in Western societies, explaining the

variable trajectories of ethnic differentiation or assimilation under different historical circumstances (Olzak & Nagel 1986).

Ethnicity and the state

Such competition now almost universally takes place in the context of powerfully organized states; and the presence of such state structures has several important sets of consequences. Our 1969 analyses gave limited attention to the effects of state organization, focusing more on dispersed ethnic competition for resources, and the lifestyle commonalities and distinctions it generated. More recent literature has veered to the other extreme, as if assuming that all ethnic processes must be understood with reference to state structures of the very specific variant represented by late industrial democratic civil society. The contributions of both perspectives need to be fused.

Firstly, it is essential to recognize that a modern state provides a vast field of public goods, which it may allocate to categories of persons, or leave open to competition. These are resources of another kind, not amenable to analysis in terms of normal ecologic processes, but subject to regulation and imperious allocation by the state. Secondly, the state also deals directly with groups and categories of people, regulating their lives and their movements. Increasingly, we also see new groups organizing and claiming access and rights within these states; and even more recently, states acting by administrative fiat and selecting refugees from distant camps or imposing annual quotas of access, thus thrusting people together in close contiguity without any prior process of competition or mutual adaptation. Valued resources are arbitrarily allocated, or denied, by bureaucratic action, thereby creating communities of fate – which will next tend to emerge as social, self-aware groups – from formal legal categories. In this way, modern states often generate categorical distinctions within the field of continuous cultural variation, and thus the very kind of groups which according to narrower theory are supposed to be inimical to such state structures.

We need to make our studies of ethnicity capable of grasping these contemporary processes; but there is a danger that what has already

been developed of concepts and insights may be lost in the process. To build robust theory in anthropology we need to remain as broadly comparative as the scope of our total range of ethnographies permits: we must seek generalization, and not let our discourse about the late 20th century displace a terminology capable of analyzing a wider range of forms and processes. To ensure this, we should take care both that we do not subsume all forms of cultural pluralism under ethnicity (cf. Barth 1984), and that we continue to give analytical attention to varied forms of ethnicity and pluralism, under varying political parameters, embracing the Ottoman Empire and the Kula Circle as much as the refugee camps that characterize our world and times.

So as to integrate the level of statehood successfully into our analysis, we need to see the state as an actor, not merely as a symbol or an idea. To do this we must employ analytical procedures that differentiate rather than lump states in terms of their structures and the patterns of action they pursue. I suggest that we must start by analyzing the policies of each state by linking these policies to features of the *regime*, that is, the state's policy-making core. We are then able to depict the power represented by the state as a specifiable third player in the processes of boundary construction between groups, rather than confound the regime, and its powers and interests, with the more nebulous concepts of state and nation. Different regimes require very different conditions for their perpetuation and have quite different agendas; as actors they therefore will pursue dissimilar policies towards ethnic categories and movements in the populations they seek to control. Identity management, ethnic community formation, public laws and policies, regime interests and measures, and global processes thus fuse and form a complex field of politics and cultural processes.

Three interpenetrating levels

To sort out the connected forces that interweave in this complex fashion, I recommend that we model the processes separately on a micro, a median and a macro level – distinguishing them only so that we may better illuminate their interconnections.

A micro level is required to model the processes effecting experience and the formation of identities. It focuses on persons and interpersonal interaction: the events and arenas of human lives; the management of selves in the complex context of relationships, demands, values and ideas; the resultant experiences of self-value, and the embracements and rejections of symbols and of social fellowships that are formative of the person's consciousness of ethnic identity. Constraints and parameters on this level will in large part derive from other levels, but come together as a lived context for each person's activities and interpretations. What ensues on this level lays foundations and creates the perplexities that again feed back on the other levels.

A median level is needed to depict the processes that create collectivities and mobilize groups for diverse purposes by diverse means. This is the field of entrepreneurship, leadership and rhetoric; here stereotypes are established and collectivities are set in motion. Each such collectivity will have its particular dynamic arising from its requirements of group reproduction, leadership and ideology. Processes on this level intervene to constrain and compel people's expression and action on the micro level; package deals and either-or choices are imposed, and many aspects of the boundaries and dichotomies of ethnicity are fashioned. Too many analyses make only ad hoc reference to this level of contexts and constraints, rather than modelling them systematically; thereby they also tend to obscure the assumptions with regard to agency and structure on which those analyses and interpretations in fact rest.

Finally, there is the macro level of state policies: the legal creations of bureaucracies allocating rights and impediments according to formal criteria, but also the arbitrary uses of force and compulsion that underpin many regimes. Ideologies are articulated and imposed, not least the ideas of nationalism, which often subtly transpose some of the identities arising from ethnicity. The control and manipulation of public information and discourse is an extremely important part of the activities of every regime. But global discourses, transnational (NGOs) and international organizations play a variable but increasingly

important role on this level, and often articulate closely with interests on the median level.

Micro

Let us return to the Pakistani family in Oslo, and focus on a daughter, born in Norway, to illuminate processes in identity formation. An important part of her experience will be that of attending school. Some schools districts have a substantial enough Pakistani population so she will tend to have her interpretation of school influenced by a Pakistani peer group. Some Pakistani parents intervene and forbid their daughters to bring Norwegian schoolmates home, or visit them in their homes; but most Pakistani children growing up in Norway will share the deeply formative experiences of school life with their non-Pakistani classmates. Moreover, the Norwegian school system is a singularly uniform national system with identical curricula, exams, etcetera for all; and with a near absence of traditionally resident minorities the shared school experience has served for most of us as a quintessential component of Norwegian identity. Evidence of such background, with the skills and taken-for-grantedness it implies, will consequently to most Norwegians signal status as an ethnic insider and, when lodged in a physically recognizable 'foreigner' by conventional Norwegian categories, represent a significant anomaly and blurring of ethnic distinctions.

Let me add another aspect of the school experience. Physical education, as part of the school curriculum, regularly becomes a painful issue to the Pakistani parents of a daughter. They generally have no objection to physical exuberance in small girls, but become increasingly concerned about such – by their standards, totally unseemly and inappropriate – behaviour as their daughter approaches sexual maturity. Yet many girls who have grown up enjoying athletics and games are loath to discontinue them for the passivity of modest demeanour; besides, physical education continues as a required subject throughout high school. Even more threatening, of course, are cross-sexual friendships, romance, and courting, as these develop as a regular part of teenage school life. Unless they can be prevented,

they threaten to significantly reduce the girl's value on a Pakistani marriage market, or in the extreme case to lead to out-group marriage and a failure of family, ethnic and religious reproduction. Severe pressures are brought to bear in the family, in some cases leading to their daughter's running away from home or being forcibly removed to Pakistan by the family.

What we see unfolding in such cases are the individual and social processes involved in identity formation. The boundary *and* the content of Pakistani identity are being contested within the crucible of the family; and we must recognize the powerful forces that are mobilized to *silence* and *erase* experiences that would foster the continuities which ethnic boundaries deny. We need longitudinal and developmental studies of such processes to learn more about them, and to discover possible lifecourse phase constraints in the formation of ethnic identities under varying organizational circumstances.

Interestingly, Norwegian agencies on median and state level have tended to intervene in these processes in ways that support the creation of discontinuity. In an effort to practice respect for 'another culture', child welfare agencies and social services are loath to impose Norwegian standards and solutions, but seek the advice of minority spokesmen. But since these spokesmen are invariably senior men of a traditionalist bent, such a move serves to favour the strongest parties in these struggles and to disadvantage the weakest, such as minors and rebellious wives. The coalition of Norwegian authorities and ethnic spokesmen springs logically from the reification and homogenization of 'culture' which each of the parties performs. As a result, progressive bureaucrats have probably provided traditional patriarchs with greater power over family members in Norway than they ever had in a Pakistani setting, where wives and children often are in a position to mobilize more network support for their views, on issues that were more tractable and familiar to an informed public opinion. Thereby, with the help of Norwegian public agencies, the new generation's bridging potential based on cross-cutting areas of experience is silenced and flux is reduced – probably to the detriment of longer term multi-ethnic accommodation.

Median

Most studies of ethnicity have quite reasonably focused on the median level, and the processes whereby people sort themselves out by locality, neighbourhood, niche, and access and use of public goods, in the story of ethnic mobilization. But by studying these processes separately from their experiential bases on the micro level, we may have weakened our analyses, as well as our ability to influence public and popular policy regarding ethnic movements, by not exposing clearly enough the roots of tragedy and tolerance found in the interface. Anthropologists regularly operate too narrowly as (self-appointed) advocates and apologists for ethnic groups in their grievances. They have neglected the closer analysis of processes of collective decision making that emerge on the median level, and how they may produce policies and actions at odds with the popular will and the shared interests of people in the populations affected. I believe recent developments in Bosnia provide a thought-provoking case. I base the following interpretation on materials collected and analyzed by Tone Bringa from a mixed community of mainly Muslims and Croats.

As has often been the case with field anthropologists on the spot, Bringa had little sense of foreboding after her initial period of community study in 1987-88; and we are given the familiar picture of somewhat constrained but basically harmonious relations between Muslim and Roman Catholic members of the community (Bringa 1991). As the conflict grew and violence escalated, Bringa argued strongly against the proposed plans for partition. She blamed international mediators for the continued deterioration of relations, and for their lack of acknowledgement of multi-ethnic potential and pluralistic tradition in Bosnia (Bringa 1993).

Though state-level leaders clearly played a central role in pursuing confrontation, and international expertise may have thought too conventionally in terms of partition, there can be little doubt that a wave of grassroots mobilization in confrontation also welled up, not only on the Serb side but among Croats and Muslims as well. Are we then witnesses of another case where the anthropologist holds a slanted and hopelessly romantic view and is therefore unable to

interpret in advance the evidence that commentators and other analysts see so clearly in retrospect?

I think not. There is room for many and more discriminating views. Firstly, there is no reason to fix attitudes as if they were unchanging over time: as all cultural things they will be in flux, and often quite volatile – especially in response to the shocks of humiliations of violence. Leo Kuper (1977) has recorded a recurring pattern in cases of popularly perpetrated genocide where a slow deterioration of relations seems to reach a point of no return, and then quickly change into devastating carnage. We simply do not know, but should do the work to discover, how such runaway processes may come about.

Moreover, when the above text speaks in homogenizing fashion of ethnic mobilization, it evokes a whole population but refers only to a certain number of adult males – and without any data on the circumstances, options and precipitating events of how each of them was mobilized. We should be far more fastidious in acknowledging and observing variation and positioning. We also need data, not facile guesswork on how different people who embrace different views are positioned, construct and evaluate their options and visions. Thus, Bringa was told on a visit in 1993 how men of the opposed groups fought (elsewhere), while women in the community intervisited across ethnic boundaries and even passed information to each other about the fates of husbands, brothers and sons. We must not perpetuate simplistic pictures of such fateful situations; and I see reason to accept Bringa's account as evidence for a persisting diversity of positions and a continued potential for coexistence even at the height of conflict. Perhaps the present situation results because local Bosnian warlords are able to pursue their own enterprises and manipulate confrontations and rhetoric in efforts to create schisms and eliminate options, leading a disempowered and suffering public further and further into a labyrinth of conflict. My simple point is that this and many similar situations urgently need to be analyzed: not from partisan positions or from arbitrarily chosen first principles, but in a careful effort to apply an informed theory of culture and action to discover the complex truths of ethnic coexistence and the roots of

to discover the complex truths of ethnic coexistence and the roots of violence. Political leaders, potential mediators, affected population, and the general public alike deserve that we carry out this task with the greatest possible urgency and precision.

Macro

Salient imagined communities that relate to ethnicity on the macro level are, besides the ethnic groups themselves, the states or nations, the major religious communities and especially Islam, and the global international arena and discourse. The main actors are regimes and the groups they confront (organized ethnic movements, liberation movements, etcetera), as well as international organizations of various kinds. It is essential that the imagined units and the units of action are not confounded in a macro-level analysis, but are accounted for in the way that each affects the context for the other. A major part of the action unfolds between the regimes (as well as their bureaucracies and armies) and the populations they seek to control. But regimes must also look to the international arena to secure their position, as well as to the various modes of legitimization that obtain within their respective states; so the context for any particular ethnic group's relations to the regime(s) under which it exists are quite complex and often conflicting. Regimes variously act with persecution, violence and genocide, or with positive action by selective enrolment in the army or the bureaucracy, the allocation of public goods, etcetera – and sometimes with both at the same time. Anthropologists have rightly been more prepared than most social scientists to acknowledge and confront these complex realities, and less surprised at the coexistence of supposedly archaic forms of 'tribal' loyalty with citizenship. But when we adopt the vague language of political commentators and speak about the 'resurgence' of ethnicity, we may be blunting our analyses. Rather than suggest a typology of the varying circumstances of ethnic conflict and suppression, let me therefore focus briefly on this supposed resurgence, as it allows me to highlight the importance of the battleground of information control, rather than the more obvious one of substantive action.

Most of the talk of global resurgence of ethnicity is based on impressions generated by mass media reporting activism and conflict where they were formerly silent both on the issues and places. There is every reason for us to try to be more precise. In some areas the very same kinds of events also took place before, but were unreported or misidentified. In the former Soviet Union, there is no doubt that new forms of ethnic mobilization are now unfolding – but is that appropriately described as a resurgence? All the evidence indicates that there was always in the Soviet Union a level of individual discrimination that ensured a wealth of personal experience of ethnic identity as a salient fact of life. What we are seeing may not be the reassertion of identities that had been attenuated, so much as their greater visibility following on from the enhanced freedom to express them after the fall of the former repressive regimes.

But not only is the outside analyst misled by a regime's manipulation of public information: citizens of the state are also affected. Repression does not only prevent one from displaying one's own identity – it also reduces one's knowledge of the commitments of other people. Action, after all, produces information as well as material consequences – specifically on the pervasiveness and strength of the embracement of identity among others – so a regime's effectiveness in controlling information and stamping out forms of ethnic assertion may create a subjective sense in each of being alone with an unacknowledged sense of ethnicity, leaving the person's embracement of it weakened. Thus the salience of ethnicity, the acts which it entails, the symbols and diacritica by which it is affirmed, the imagined community it asserts, and the power and information structure of the context, all intermesh and affect each other in complex ways that are poorly retrieved by a concept of 'resurgence'.

In the Middle East, as among Muslims throughout the world, the dominant discourse on identity is indeed increasingly cast in terms of religion, not ethnicity. Most Middle Easterners today increasingly emphasize the saliency of Islam. I would suggest this reflects a change in the relative significances of *arenas* in which people perceive themselves.

The change can be highlighted by a simply drawn contrast. In Ottoman times and territories, people lived their lives within an empire, and they moved in an arena defined as the civilized world of the 'House of Islam'. True, this was a partial world, with the 'House of War' around it; but it formed the centre and encompassed everything of real value. Though it also contained other religious communities, the salient differences within it could be seen as cultural, differentiating people as members of ethnic groups. Ethnicity also significantly defined a person's position vis-a-vis the Ottoman state.

Today, on the other hand, we all move with a consciousness of the whole world as an arena – a world which for Muslims must seem out of kilter when Islam no longer sets the parameters for civilized existence. Particularly insidious, I believe, are the massive imports of consumer goods and styles, which are extraneous to Muslim civilization but provide the very vehicles by which everyday personhood and identity are expressed. This cannot but give Middle Easterners a new and shocking sense of being on the periphery of the world; and the conspicuous collective political and economic impotence of Muslim states on the world scene confirms this image. In various contexts, then, the salient experience of identity is shifted from one of belonging to an ethnic group in the arena of the civilized Muslim world, to being a Muslim in a world arena where non-Muslims dominate, and where Muslims may even be cast as second-rate persons. In such an arena, ethnic group identity pales in significance while Islam becomes salient – but disturbingly so, as a stigma and a fighting issue.

We are thus made aware of a dominant, context-defining imagery at work in determining the saliency of ethnicity as against other identities. Continuing for a moment in the Middle East, contemporary life there is also dominated by another important set of arenas: the political states. In states like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, or Iran we see powerful organizational apparatuses based on the utilization of modern technologies of force and communication, each controlled by a tiny regime. These regimes thereby command immense resources,

determine stratification, largely create their own environment of information, and suck in elite personnel with no regard to ethnicity except to the extent that the regime itself chooses to favour or persecute on such bases.

These regimes control their territories in ways the Ottomans and other traditional Middle Eastern states never could. They decide directly or indirectly people's access to all material value, and determine the processes of law, cultural policy, education and welfare. They crush any and every collective counter-force that might show itself – while at the same time providing all willing persons with an identity and considerable facilities and advantages, as citizens of civil society.

Again we come up against the same tangled and poorly understood phenomena: the distortion of public information and its possible effects on self-assignment and ascription; the centralized suppression of all internal political processes based on collective identities, linked to a selective favouring of certain forms of individual ambition; the enhanced scope, in a technically modern civil society, for simultaneous disfranchisement of a population and the delivery of welfare services to its members. Under such conditions, when the regime succeeds, ethnic identity can manifest itself in subtle and covert forms only. It loses its saliency to us as analysts. But how the experience of identity may be constructed by the members of such societies, in the privacy of their hearts and minds, is a matter that needs to be appraised with acuteness and care, since for many purposes ethnic processes simply disappear from the view of anyone without access to the most intimate and trustful forums.

At other times, it is the global discourse that shapes the arena. It may be only as a last resort, as when the victims of collective violence want 'that the world may know'; or it may offer a powerful lever, as when aboriginal peoples nationalize and globalize their efforts to renegotiate their position on the basis of principles of self-determination or at least participation. Somehow, in various proportions, brute force, evocative symbolism and moral appeal are made

commensurate in these arenas where the most global systems and the most intimate experiences of identity are played out.

Conclusions

Ethnicity and the debates it inspires have a way of constantly changing shape and direction. In the debates surrounding the writing of *Ethnic groups*... I remember a perceptive discussant who pointed out how my formulation of the problem made its solution logically impossible: one cannot handle something which changes boundaries *and* changes contents at the same time. It is as bad as trying to think of two things at once. With the help of contemporary thought on culture we are now better equipped to transcend one part of the impasse: the difficulty of simultaneously struggling with cultures with boundaries and social groups with boundaries. Today we are more able, if we try, to conceptualize culture as flux, in a field of continuous, distributed variation. Thus, we can more readily analyze the processes of social dichotomization that marginally affect that distribution, that flux, and forge human identities and human fates in the process. We need to recognize that the dichotomized cultural differences thus produced are vastly overstated in ethnic discourse, and so we can relegate the more pernicious myths of deep cultural cleavages to the category where they belong: as formative myths that sustain a social organization of difference, but not as descriptions of the actual distribution of cultural stuff.

To strengthen our analysis further, I urge that we try to think and write as simply and soberly as we can on these complex themes, but that we do not shrink from the necessary task of reaching all the way from individual experiences to global contexts, and that we must be simultaneously perceptive of action as well as symbolization. I have suggested that we can facilitate this by heuristically separating three levels of analysis – the micro, median and macro – and by describing some focal arenas within which crucial processes unfold. In these ways – and others, which others will identify – there is much work to be done and much insight to be gained. What drives us in our analysis may well be a humane concern with the miseries caused in

the world today by ethnic divisions and persecutions; but our task is not merely to declare our compassion, solidarity, or ideological preferences in evocative language – it is the hard work of analyzing and modelling in order to understand more of what is going on.

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Ethnicity, nationalism, and state-making

Ethnic groups and boundaries: past and future

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When I was first invited to present this lecture, I thought I was to offer a kind of *homage* to Fredrik Barth at a twentieth-fifth birthday party for *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. Although I subsequently learned that I was mistaken in assuming this 'festschrift' mode, I find I can think of nothing better than to offer an *homage* to Barth and *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, for I share in the widely held opinion that this book – following upon Leach's soon-to-be *forty*-years-old *Political systems of highland Burma*, the source of Barth's inspiration – marked an epochal shift in the anthropological study of ethnicity. And, unlike so many other social science theories generated one, two or three decades ago, it has not become outdated. Indeed, the central accomplishment of Barth and his colleagues is once again becoming important – if anything *more* important, as I will suggest later, than they may have been a decade or so ago.

This is not to say that over these 25 years in anthropology, there has been no advance from the positions set forth in *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. The study of ethnicity has become arguably *the* major industry, not just in anthropology but in the social sciences as a whole. Given the imperative for 'growth' and 'innovation' that commands intellectual life just as it commands other forms of production in western societies (particularly now, with the ever-increasing commodification of even the production of knowledge), it would be remarkable if there had been no change in research on

ethnicity. In some respects, work in this field today hardly resembles the essays in *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. Nevertheless, I contend that there is a direct line from the central insights of Barth's 'school' to much of what now passes for state-of-the-art work on ethnicity. It is in this sense that I see *Ethnic groups and boundaries* as a kind of apical ancestor and an unusually durable accomplishment in anthropology.

Let me begin my elaboration of these thoughts – and my *homage* more generally – with a word about my own relation to *Ethnic groups and boundaries* and to Fredrik Barth. Although, regrettably, I remember little from my days as a graduate student, I recall with surprising vividness the moment in 1971 when my roommate told me she was thinking of taking a course on the subject of 'ethnic groups and boundaries' (which she said as if the words were joined with hyphens) and she had just been reading this interesting book on the subject. There was something about the phrase – 'ethnic-groups-and-boundaries' – that truly caught my attention, so much so that I can still recall where I was standing in our house when she said it. The following semester I took a course on ethnicity in which I read Barth's book and some others, heard a colloquium by Michael Hechter that was to become part of his influential book *Internal colonialism*, wrote a term paper on Welsh identity, and found myself irretrievably hooked. Several years later, I had the great fortune to enjoy a semester working with Barth at Johns Hopkins, where I had just taken a job and where he was a visitor. We spent the semester in continuous argument, which his kindness and courtesy made unfailingly amicable and which contributed a great deal to my subsequent writing on the subjects of ethnicity and nationalism.

From this personal aside, it should be clear that it is no exaggeration to say that my own scholarly obsession of a quarter-century was set by the title and message of Barth's book. To reflect upon its contribution in the context of a general assessment of the direction of research on this topic is both a welcome opportunity and an honour.

My comments here will centre on a few key insights of Barth and his colleagues. I emphasize, in particular, the following three: (1) The starting point for understanding ethnicity is not in analysis of 'culture'

but in viewing ethnicity as a *form of social organization*, an organizational type. It is, as Barth's title states, a form of organizing cultural difference. (2) The roots of this organizational form are not in the *cultural content* associated with ethnic identities but rather in the fact of their *dichotomization* – the presence of boundaries separating groups. This shifts the emphasis from seemingly 'objective' cultural traits to behaviour (including 'cultural' behaviour) that is socially effective in maintaining group boundaries. (3) Ethnic identifications should be seen as based in ascription and self-ascription, rather than in 'possessing' a certain cultural inventory; this focuses analytic attention on the possible *manipulation* of identities and on their 'situational' character. Central to all three insights was a dethronement of a certain concept of culture and an invitation to rethink its meaning as manifested in 'ethnicity'.

In thinking about these three insights, I will seek to establish what has happened to them or might happen to them, what questions posed in relation to them can push these insights in new directions, and more generally, in what direction I think the study of ethnicity should be going, from the impetus Barth gave in *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. Although I will mention a few illustrative titles, I do not plan to offer a comprehensive overview of work done on this topic or to acknowledge all the major landmarks since 1969. I take up the three points – ethnicity as organizational type, as rooted in dichotomization rather than in some notion of culture, and as situational – in reverse order, beginning with 'situationalism'. In each section, the discussion doubles back upon itself, expanding upon themes already raised.

Situationalism

That ethnic identities are flexible, changeable and situationally adaptive was not, of course, an insight original to Barth. It was derived in part from one obvious source, Leach's *Political systems*, with its discussion of Kachins 'becoming' Shans. A notion of situationalism also appears independently in papers such as Michael Moerman's on the Lue (*Who are the Lue?* and *Being Lue*), published in 1965 and 1968.

Following the appearance of *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, however, the idea of situationalism gained widespread acceptance during the 1970s in anthropology (far more so, I would say, than in the rest of the social sciences), its most frequently cited illustration being Judith Nagata's article on Malaysia (Nagata 1974). The idea spurred counter-arguments which suggested that not all situations permit manipulation of identities and choice among them (which is not to say that Barth had claimed the contrary), choice being particularly constrained for members of racial minorities (cf. Vincent 1974). This usefully conjoined the discussion of ethnicity with discussions about race and class – more broadly, about the nature of the larger social orders in which ethnic identities operate. In brief, the arguments against situationalism posed the question of how the very possibility of situational ethnicity should itself be situated – in which circumstances is it more or less likely? Despite the systemic constraints that such challenges placed upon the idea of situational identity manipulation, however, the notion that ethnic identities are not necessarily fixed and permanent but malleable, in at least some circumstances, has rightly become common wisdom within anthropology, and Barth's work did much to make it so.

Questions about the situating of situationalism did not, to my knowledge, raise the following idea. If one thinks about the areas of the world from which the most influential examples of situationalism (including the papers in *Ethnic groups and boundaries*) were drawn, one finds an interesting pattern. They came from Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and so on, but not from Europe: that is, they came from the 'Third World' rather than the 'First'. This may be partly an artifact of anthropology's until recently rather limited study of the 'First World', but I believe the difference signals something more. For if we think of the most influential work on ethnicity in a European context – Cole and Wolf's *Hidden frontier* (1974) – there is nothing very malleable about the identities they discuss. Instead, the authors emphasize the *fixity* of the self-conceptions of their Italian and German villagers, who insisted on seeing themselves as different despite some clear similarities in their actual behaviour.

By this I mean to suggest that both the utility of situationalism as an analytic approach and its possibilities in everyday practice are a function of the kind of state-making within which ethnic identities take shape. Such identities will be less flexible wherever the process of modern nation-state formation has the greatest longevity and has proceeded the furthest; wherever long-standing nationalist movements have effectively inculcated the sentiment of a single kind of belonging; and wherever colonial states had more extensive and deeper rather than shallower roots. This means that identities will be less flexible in Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin America, for example, in comparison to those in Southeast Asia or the Middle East. In the former regions, I would suggest, there is less room for disjuncture or play between ascription and self-ascription, which is a key aspect of manipulating identities. I believe, this is because in the former – particularly in Western Europe – social persons have been created for whom ethnic ‘identity’ is a fundamental element of self-conception, rooted in notions of loyalty and personal consistency across contexts: these notions make it difficult to alter one’s affiliations. Such alteration is possible chiefly across generations, especially when facilitated by ideologies of progress and social mobility. The kind of self-consistent person who ‘has’ an ‘identity’ is a product of a specific historical process: the process of modern nation-state formation. It is a process that has unfolded in a variety of ways (this variety being obscured by the single term ‘nation-state’), but that entails ever-greater efforts by state-makers to keep track of, manage, and control their ‘populations’.

Not only the forging of various ‘identities’ has been important in effecting this control but also the idea that to *have* ‘identities’ is normal, and that any given person can ‘have’ only *one* identity of a certain basic kind (ethnic, national, gender). ‘Identities’ are crucial tags by which state-makers keep track of their political subjects; one cannot keep track of people who are one thing at one point, another thing at another. (For the same reason, states have instituted surnames in place of patronymics or nicknames, which change with each person or generation.)

In the case of Yugoslavia we can see something of how modern state-making presses toward single identities. Yugoslavia was a state that contained people of many different ethnicities (Serb, Croat, Bosnian, Macedonian, etcetera) lodged within a broader identity-information, 'Yugoslav'. As in the Soviet Union, everyone, including offspring of mixed marriages, had to choose an identity (it was marked on their ID cards). One possible identity was 'Yugoslav' – the expected result of a process of making a unitary 'Yugoslavia'. This 'Yugoslav' identity proved increasingly attractive as mixed marriages increased in number, for their offspring found 'Yugoslav' identity helpful in avoiding the confusion and awkwardness of having to choose between, say, the Serb and Croat identities of one's parents. It also left plenty of room for switching ethnicities – for being Serb today and Croat tomorrow, and for holding allegiance to both. Although 19th and 20th century national movements had produced single identities for people defined as 'Croats', 'Serbs', 'Macedonians', etcetera, in Yugoslavia overall, this process, while advancing, had not gone so far as to preclude holding multiple identities.

Within the states of Yugoslav succession, however, this is no longer true. Persons of mixed origin – those who once declared themselves 'Yugoslavs' – are being forced to elect a single identity. 'Ethnic cleansing' does not mean only that people of the 'other' group are being exterminated: it also means the extermination of alternative identity choices. The prospects for studying 'situationalism' in ex-Yugoslavia (not to mention the prospects for many of its inhabitants) look grim.

Another example of the same point – that modern state-making has hitherto required single identities – is the current 'diversity' movement in the United States and other western countries. 'Diversity' legitimates the idea that a given nation-state can have a variety of ethnic groups within it (and this may distinguish the 'post-modern' state from the 'modern' one of the 19th and 20th centuries). Even so, I believe there is a tendency for these multiple identities to become imperative: you can have only one of the many available options, or else you do not fit into the newly racializing niches that multiculturalism is creating. While one may still manipulate options

situationally *within* a 'multicultural' category – between Hoopa and Yurok Indian, for example, or Puerto Rican and Mexican – I believe that categories like Native American and Latino are themselves becoming increasingly mandatory.

As an approach to ethnicity, situationalism had the virtue of challenging the dominant western nation-state ideology according to which all identities are fixed and unique. This ideology had governed the study of ethnic identities in western social science. By debunking this ideology – by helping us to see that it was an ideology peculiar to certain kinds of states with certain historical trajectories – situationism facilitated the insight that the very possibility of identity choice varies with different *kinds of states*, and by the histories of state-making and the capacities of state-makers in one place or another.

I do not mean to say that the consolidation of modern nation-states obviates situational manipulation of identities altogether; such manipulation might still occur in micro-interactions, especially those in which one is a stranger.¹ I contend only that aspects of the state-making process tend to make identities more rather than less imperative, as identity categories become mandatory elements of people's existence within the state. This position may seem in direct contradiction with what I call situationalism's chief virtue, its questioning of fixed identities, which I am now saying are a reality. But without the insights of situationalism, it would have been much harder to grasp the point that the imperativeness of identities has its own historicity.

Here, then, might be one direction for the study of ethnicity, anchored in Barth's work but moving beyond it: a sustained inquiry into the conditions that make identities more or less imperative, according to the organization and histories of the states that contain them. Thus, Barthian ideas about ascription/self-ascription and situational manipulation would come together with current theories about the constitution of modern subjectivities and with an anthropology of the 'person', as well as with an inquiry into how the forms we call 'states' have been variously made.

Culture

A second very significant aspect of Barth's approach to ethnicity was his emphasis on dichotomization at the expense of 'culture'. Prior to his work, and with the exception of the warning shot fired by Leach in 1954, 'culture' was the basic ground for most anthropological work on ethnicity, usually under the label of 'tribalism'. Nearly all analysts considered common culture or the sharing of objective cultural traits, along with a shared origin, as central to ethnic identities (see Isajiw 1974:117-118). This view accompanied the presupposition that entities called 'society' and 'culture' are coterminous bounded entities, integrated both internally and with one another. Given the devastation wrought upon such ideas by Leach in *Political systems* and his proof that ostensibly 'shared' cultural notions in Burma did not have single meanings, Barth was free to pose the question of how culture can be integrated and/or shared *to varying degrees*. (Indeed, one detects in his work a thorough-going scepticism that sharing of values is possible at all.) His 'Introduction' to *Ethnic groups and boundaries* proposed that transactions across ethnic lines were possible with only the most minimal sharing of evaluative principles, and he showed that this minimal agreement was nonetheless sufficient to sustain interaction despite massive disagreements between interacting groups. By implication, we might say the same of interactions within a given group (that is, among members of an ostensibly 'shared culture') as between members of different ethnic collectivities. To paraphrase Barth's point: he showed that in ethnic interactions, 'culture' is something important enough to disagree about, yet such disagreement does not obviate social relations.

However, given the prevailing assumptions among anthropologists that ethnicity is culture and culture is shared, Barth's statement that 'The critical focus of investigation (...) becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses' (Barth 1969:15) amounted to a stunning demotion of a concept fundamental not just to the idea of ethnic identity but to anthropology as well, especially cultural anthropology in the United States. It was a demotion that proved very fruitful. The insight that boundaries are

prior to the cultural 'stuff' they enclose freed ethnographers to do a tremendous amount of creative work – my personal favourites include Louis Golomb's book on Thais and Malays (1978), Cole & Wolf's on the Tyrol (1974), and George Collier's on Zinacantan (1975). Such work easily outstripped the pedestrian efforts that persisted in sociology and political science, where this insight was slow to penetrate. I think, for example, of Harold Isaacs's *Idols of the tribe* (1974) or Glazer's *Ethnicity. Theory and experience* (1975).

Barth's partial liberation of ethnicity from culture either spawned or accompanied several different trends. One of them was to make culture entirely epiphenomenal to the political economy of ethnicity – as I did, more or less, in my book on Transylvania (1983). Another was to reconsider exactly *which* aspects of culture were in fact indispensable to thinking about ethnicity in a given place: that is, to *problematize* the cultural side of ethnic identities instead of taking it for granted. An excellent example of this – one that appeared in fact contemporaneously with Barth's book – was Abner Cohen's *Custom and politics in urban Africa* (1969). That approach in turn contributed to 'instrumentalist' analyses of ethnic group politics, such as those investigating how manipulations of the idea of 'culture' helped to form ethno-regional or separatist movements.

From here, work on ethnicity has evolved in ways that directly implicate theories of culture and that therefore affect the very core of anthropology, especially in the United States. Because the concept of culture has been central to work on ethnicity, any change in thinking about culture has ramifications for thinking about ethnicity; at the same time, the subject of ethnicity affords special purchase for critiques of the idea of culture. The trajectories of culture theory, then, and of work on ethnicity have been parallel. Thus, Barth's central question, 'What if we took away from ethnicity the emphasis on *shared culture*?', was part of a broader retheorization of the concept of culture, a reconsideration that runs from Anthony F. C. Wallace's discussion of 'secondary equivalence structures' (1961) on through Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) vision of culture as practice (see also, e.g., Fox 1985). This retheorization, in turn, has affected work on ethnicity.

If we see culture (as many anthropologists now do) not as a zone of shared meanings but as a zone of *disagreement* and *contest*, what happens to the idea of ethnicity as shared culture? It necessarily becomes the study of culture as politics. The result has grown into a substantial sub-branch of the ethnicity industry, devoted to the politics of culture. Works in this vein include Handler's on Quebec (1988), Dominguez's on Israel (1989), McDonald's on Brittany (1989), and my own on Romania (1991), as well as the many writings on the 'invention of tradition' (e.g., Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). Behind these writings is a view of ethnicity as tied to social ideologies, particularly to ideologies of nationalism, which specific social groups construct around notions of 'culture' and 'origin'.

Work on the politics of culture in relation to nationalism has produced a decided blurring of the boundaries (sic!) defining both ethnicity as a topic and anthropology's treatment of it. It used to be possible to talk of ethnicity without landing in the great swamp of 'nationalism', but this is no longer the case. Anthony Smith observes that work on nationalism in the last twenty years differs from previous work in

... the growing convergence of two fields, which had formerly been treated as separate: the study of ethnicity and ethnic community, and the analysis of national identity and nationalism. The former had been largely the preserve of anthropologists and social psychologists (...) [t]he latter (...) the province of historians (...). The ethnic revival in the West, starting in the early 1960s, led to a reassessment of both "ethnicity" and "nationalism", and to the realisation that they were, both as empirical realities and fields of study, intimately related. (...) [S]cholars soon came to realise that, in the words of Walker Connor, nation-building was also nation-destroying (Smith 1992:1-2).

Smith's observation requires us to ask (as Barth did not have to, when he took the 'culture' out of ethnicity) What *is* the relation of ethnicity to nationalism? Is the latter just the former writ large, or, to paraphrase the old issue about the relation between a language and a dialect, is nationalism just ethnicity backed by an army? To clarify the relations among these concepts should be part of our agenda now. And to pursue that agenda, I believe, implicates the concept of culture, once again requiring that we gain a better understanding of *why* it is that

ethnicity has for so long been understood by both scholars and ethnic activists in terms of *shared culture*. *Why* has 'culture' – and especially *shared* culture – been so important to thinking about 'ethnicity' for so long? What is the relation between ethnicity and forces that seek to reify and homogenize culture – to *make* it 'shared'? What is it that has made culture (to use my wording above) something important enough to disagree about? Although these are not questions that arose in Barth's book or its immediate sequels, the preconditions for asking them (again, as I suggested above with respect to situating situationism) were in his work: specifically, in his resolute separation of culture from ethnicity.

The precondition for answering these questions is to juxtapose ethnicity with nationalism in the context of modern capitalism and state-formation. How do all these interconnect with the idea of 'shared culture'? Works that have addressed such questions directly have tended to speak of nationalism, rather than of ethnicity. Among the best-known are those by Ernest Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm (1990). Gellner argues that nationalism, in the form of a press toward reifying and homogenizing national culture, necessarily accompanies industrialization because state-level political actors in industrializing contexts must assure a certain level of skill and competence within the working population. Anderson, instead, sees the link between nationalism and cultural homogenization in the spread of print capitalism and aspects of administration (his 'looping sojourns' among provincial and capital cities). Hobsbawm brings in just about everything relating to the economic and socio-political concomitants of the development of modern capitalism.

None of these authors, however, explicitly brings *ethnicity* into his discussion of nationalism as cultural homogenization. Yet precisely this cluster – ethnicity, nationalism, state formation, and cultural homogenization (not to mention others, such as race, class and gender) – is the centre of attention for Brackette Williams (1989, 1990, 1991). She writes of the 'homogenizing process' that accompanies state-making and is basic to the modern nation-state's form of rule (1989:426); she links this expressly with ethnicity.

The starting point for understanding the relations between ethnicity and nationalism, a useful prologue to the analysis of the interpenetration of race, class, and culture in nation-states, must be [the process of constructing myths of homogeneity] and the material factors that motivate and rationalize [this] (Williams 1989:429).

Williams urges us, then, to return to the point with which I ended my discussion of 'situationalism' above, and to ask not just 'What is the relation between ethnicity and culture?', but also 'What is the relationship among ethnicity, culture and the state?' Although there has been some work on this topic (for example, Brass 1985; Fox et al. 1981; Verdery 1983), it warrants still more attention: linking ethnicity, culture and the state, then, should be another future focus of research on ethnicity. I shall clarify this point as well as Williams's argument by tying them to the third of Barth's key insights: his focus on ethnicity as a form of social organization, a way of organizing cultural difference.

The organization of difference

In dethroning culture from its place as the *sine qua non* of ethnicity, Barth emphasized instead that ethnicity is a fundamental means of ordering social life, a means that relies on manipulating 'cultural traits' and ideas about origin so as to communicate difference. This puts ethnicity in the same category as age, race, gender, caste, class, kinship – that handful of basic ordering principles which, singly or in combination, organize the social universe of humankind. For Barth, ethnicity consists of a first-order dichotomization of the social field – the establishment of a boundary between *us* and *them* – and across this boundary, differences between groups are signalled and reproduced by things like clothing, language use, culinary practices, ideas about kin obligations, standards of hospitality, etcetera. But Barth did not pose the question: 'Why and how does the *fact of difference itself* become significant?' That is, in thinking about ethnicity Barth took it for granted that difference matters, just as others had done with culture. But difference does *not* always matter, nor do all differences matter. Blue eyes and brown eyes are almost as visible as differences of skin or hair, yet eye colour is not a basis for organizing social relations.

Therefore, it is 'difference' *itself* that we must now problematize, and I think Williams and her arguments about state-building help us to do this.

Like a number of other anthropologists (for example, Cole & Wolf 1974; Fox 1985; Verdery 1983), Williams sees state-formation as the most salient context within which ethnicity is produced. For her, the state is the encompassing arena within which various groups establish and fight over symbolic conventions, strive for legitimacy, and fix inter-group relations and the distributions associated with them. It anchors the political effectiveness of notions such as 'culture', 'authenticity', 'tradition', 'common/shared', or 'barbarian'. 'Myths of homogeneity' are crucial both to stabilizing these notions and to the state's administrative tasks. In circumscribing territories and imposing cultural domination, state-makers form identities; as Williams puts it,

The ideologies we call nationalism and the subordinated subnational identities we call ethnicity result from the various plans and programs for the construction of myths of homogeneity out of the realities of heterogeneity that characterize all nation building (1989:429).

The homogeneity thus produced may serve a variety of ends, including those treated by Gellner, Anderson and others. Williams herself emphasizes state-makers' desires to create a space amenable to management; one might relate this theme to Foucault's discussions of governmentality (Burchell et al. 1991). For this purpose, a homogenizing policy creates the 'nation', as consisting of all those the state should administer, because they all ostensibly 'have something in common'. State subjects are most frequently encouraged to have 'in common' (besides their government) shared culture and/or 'ethnic' origin.

To institutionalize a notion of 'commonality', however, is to render visible all those who *fail* to hold that something in common. That is, Williams sees the relentless press toward homogeneity that underlies the totalizing process of making modern nation-states as simultaneously a press toward exclusion. The state is, in her view, the frame for producing visibility through differences whose significance it creates. In other words: state-making both

normalizes and renders deviant, and 'culture' is one of several privileged fields within which this occurs.

I understand Williams to be saying that by instituting homogeneity or commonality as normative, state-building gives socio-political significance to the fact of difference – that is, it *creates* as significant preexisting 'differences' that hitherto had not been organized as such. It groups them as differences of ethnicity, gender, locality, class, sexuality and race, each of these defined as particular *kinds* of difference with respect to the state's homogenizing project. Perhaps here we might adapt Bourdieu's language and see state-making as a process that raises 'difference' from the realm of doxa, the assumed, into the realm of notice, where disputes can occur between the orthodox and the heterodox, the normal and the strange – that is, between the values associated with what are now *recognized* as significantly different options (cf. Bourdieu 1977:164-171) but were not previously seen to be so.

For numerous reasons – such as the degree and nature of the power exercised by political elites and the resistance they encounter – states vary in the intensity of their homogenizing efforts. In consequence, certain states (especially in the 'Third World') have often pursued less radical homogenizations than do others. The study of ethnicity should thus encompass investigating the nature, intensity and means by which a given state or a given nationalist movement pursues homogenization. The processes through which it does this implicate not only culture but also the body – that is, ideas about race, gender and sexuality as well as ethnicity. Work on ethnicity therefore necessarily intersects with research into these other forms of 'difference', especially race, with which it is deeply enmeshed.

So far, I have been asking why difference becomes politically significant. The answer has brought together ethnicity, culture and projects of state-making, with culture as the locus of homogenization and of producing group visibilities that become 'ethnic' difference. These connections also encompass both nationalism and the notion of identity. A vital means for generating the homogenizations that take place on the field of culture, producing the visibility of groups

of 'different' culture, is national(ist) ideology, which establishes what should be the homogeneous culture against which all others will be rendered visible – rendered, in other words, 'ethnics' or races. Thus, ethnicity (and race with it) is the product of state-making, not its precursor (cf. Fried 1968; Williams 1989). It is not from ethnic identities that national identities develop; rather, the latter create the frame that generates the former – the frame within which ethnicity *qua* difference, in its broadest sense, acquires social significance.² At the same time, inherent in the homogenizing project of state-making is the production of subjectivities that link subjects durably to 'their' states. National ideologies and the practices of national belonging are primary means through which this occurs. Among their products are 'identities', attributes thought to inhere equally in persons and in nations. But alongside the 'national identities' produced through state-making are the 'ethnic identities' of those rendered visible-as-different through the way states are made. The practices of government in the modern state, I suggest, not only produce difference but also institute it in the form of 'identities'.³

The concept of 'identity', then, which is basic to what has been both studied and lived as 'ethnicity', is an element in a set of processes (including ideological ones) through which a particular western form – the nation-state – has become generalized across the globe, albeit with modifications for the different contexts it encounters. This suggests that a research agenda for ethnicity ought now to include a number of questions not readily imaginable in 1969, such as, What underlies the notion of 'identity' which is so crucial to ethnicity? Where has it come from, and why has it become important for human beings to 'have' (possess) 'identities'? What specific notion of 'person' or 'human being' is implied in the concept of 'identity', and what is the historical specificity of this concept? By what political, economic, social and symbolic contexts is the idea of identity informed? How are 'identities' socially constructed, and how are people who 'have' 'identities' made?

We might move from these questions to others about how 'identities', especially national ones, become socially constitutive – questions that take us a long way from the premises of 'situationalism'.

How do people 'become' ethnic or national? How is a sense of the self *as ethnic* or *as national* developed, and how do the two forms of becoming relate to one another? John Borneman makes a useful distinction between 'nationalism' and 'nationness', the former referring to conscious sentiments that take the nation as an object of active devotion, the latter to daily interactions and practices that produce an inherent and often unarticulated feeling of 'belonging', of being 'at home' (Borneman 1992:339). Beneath this inquiry rests a Foucauldian premise about the creation of modern subjects through the often invisible practices of power. We might apply the same distinction to 'ethnicity', looking for processes that produce (or fail to produce) conscious ethnic sentiment as opposed to simple ethnic being. Are there differences in the practices that make people 'national' as opposed to 'ethnic'?

Ideas and questions such as these – and I am not alone in posing them – may not be exactly what Barth had in mind when he called ethnicity a form of organizing difference (though they accord well with this idea), and they take us a considerable distance from the ethnicity of *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. They compel us to become political scientists and historical sociologists, to analyze the nature of states with a sophistication which anthropology has not really cultivated since the discipline cut its teeth on 'acephalous' systems. As a great deal of current social science literature makes clear, however, understanding ethnicity at the interface of politics, culture and the state seems to require investigations of this enlarged scope. It also requires that we investigate ethnicity in conjunction with other forms of 'differencing', such as race, gender and so on, rather than in isolation from these other forms. How many works besides Eugen Roosens's fine book *Creating ethnicity* (1989) try to view all of these simultaneously? Far too few. This, it seems to me, is the most comprehensive agenda for the study of ethnicity in relation to nationalism: to investigate both the historical processes that have produced particular political forms ('nation-states') – differently in different contexts – and also the *kinds* of internal homogenization that these nation-states have sought to realize in their different contexts.

In each case, nation-state builders pursued their homogenizations within locally varied understandings of 'same' and 'different' which implicated class, race, gender and ethnicity – but did so variously in each setting.

Before I move to a conclusion, let me use the arguments of this section to systematize some thoughts on the topic I raised earlier, concerning the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism and their connection with race. 'Ethnicity' and 'nationalism' are names for two closely related forms of social ideology. Both are means of social classification, classifying on the assumption that certain types of differences are significant. Both assume that human beings naturally come in 'kinds', and they organize these 'kinds' specifically in terms of ideas about shared culture and origin, based in quasi-kinship metaphors. Both stress the internal homogeneity of a given people and its differentiation from peoples of other kinds. Both have effects on consciousness, tending to produce in their bearers a felt sense of difference in interaction with other 'kinds' of people, although the extent and character of these effects vary from case to case. Finally, the state is crucial to the organization of both.

In all these respects ethnicity and nationalism are similar to 'race', except that racial ideologies involve intensifying the difference that is posited by seeing it as absolutely immutable: one can never change one's race, it is assumed, whereas 'ethnic' belonging can be changed over time by taking on the necessary cultural or behavioral attributes (cf. Wallman 1980). The most common vehicle for creating a presupposition of immutability is physical/phenotypical difference – skin colour, hair type, etcetera – but one also finds what I would call racist ideologies that do not entail physical differentiation, such as 19th century English attitudes toward the Irish or past and present Hungarian attitudes toward Romanians. In both cases, the latter groups of people were assumed to be congenitally inferior, constitutionally and irrevocably incapable of civilization, despite extensive overlap in the modal physical types of each with its 'other'. This point about immutability is an analyst's distinction, and it is not uniformly accepted. Many scholars (not to mention ethnic/national leaders)

would use the label 'ethnicity' to refer to systems of classification which my definition here would label 'racist' (because they assume the immutability of group ascriptions).

Despite similarities between ethnicity and nationalism, they are not wholly identical, either in their historical trajectories or in the kind of political/ideological work they accomplish. National ideologies sort the world into 'kinds of people' who relate to an actual or potential political entity known as a state (hence, 'nation-state'). That is, 'nation' in modern times labels a relation posited between states (real or aspired-to) and their putatively similar subjects, as well as differentiating the subjects of one state from those of another. The construct 'nation' has a long trajectory, from medieval times if not before, during which it meant a variety of rather different things; central to most of its meanings, however, has been the idea of a 'community of birth' (hence, *natio*). By contrast, ethnicity has not historically presupposed attachment to a 'community of birth' defined at the level of the state. The referent for ethnicity's kinship idiom is of a lower order – initially, the 'tribes' to be managed during the process of state consolidation.

Not all modern nations have had 'birth' (origin) and culture as their defining characteristics. Rather, some writers, for example, in 18th century England and France, defined their nations in terms of collective shared sovereignty (see Hobsbawm 1990:18-20). For various reasons, however, this definition has largely given way to another, such that the dominant ideologies even in immigrant countries like the United States have emphasized the notion of a shared culture (the 'melting pot'), overriding the disparate cultures and origins of their populations. This emphasis facilitates the 'myths of homogeneity' of state-making, myths that (as Williams argues) produce ethnicity as difference. It is only in the present 'multicultural' moment that we can discern a possible departure from this emphasis on cultural uniformity as the basis of nationhood, a subject I will pursue briefly below.

Ethnic groups and boundaries in the post-modern and transnational present

I suggested in my opening paragraph that not only has Barth's book retained its usefulness but it has become even more important than it was in 1969. I would now like to say why I think this is so. The reason has to do with the currently popular idea of 'difference'. In the past decade, talk of 'difference' has become ever more prominent in certain academic circles, associated especially with feminist theory and post-structuralism, and in political circles as well. Promiscuous in its uses and multiple in its meanings, it figures in discussions of the analysis of 'alterity', in post-modern ruminations on the possibility of ever knowing 'the Other', in debates within feminism between 'first-' and 'third-world' women, and in the preoccupation (in the United States, at least) with 'diversity' and 'multiculturalism' – to name only a few. Why is 'difference' suddenly so ubiquitous?

In response to a question like this, my first reflex is usually an unrepentant materialism. I think difference has something to do with how world capitalism is being restructured to cope with the systemic crisis that began in the early 1970s. Difference enters into this reconfiguration in a variety of ways. First, the changing demographics of the most-developed countries, especially the United States, suggest that white males, hitherto the bulk of the labour force, will form less than half of it within another decade. To incorporate these 'others' peaceably into a stable work force on terms other than the existing racially segmented arrangements is now an urgent task for economic managers. Second, the nature of work organization is itself undergoing major shifts, as a result of computerization and the introduction of Total Quality Management, or TQM. TQM flattens workplace hierarchies, guts middle management, and extrudes many other workers into part-time, home-based, and otherwise insecure forms of employment. Within organized workplaces, it makes cooperation the norm, in place of the conventional competition and hierarchical supervision; this change privileges styles of interacting customarily defined as 'female' and 'minority' (see Martin 1991). When the Human Resources departments of firms push for greater diversity in the

workplace, the effect is to empower these new styles, with their potential for redefining the nature of work. (Meanwhile, other members of these same minority groups, along with the majority white males, are being relegated to the fringes.)

Third, at the most general level, capital continues to accumulate through simultaneous processes of centralization/concentration and differentiation: centralizing and concentrating capital, differentiating products and markets (Harvey 1982). Both processes have been apparent during the last decade or two, with increased corporate mergers and takeovers on the one hand, and, on the other, remarkable refinements in the means for producing differentiated products and markets, including small-batch production and just-in-time inventory. A company like Benetton is representative of these combined processes, with its world-wide production and distribution network and its marketing based in a variety of styles, permuted from numerous 'ethnic traditions'. Product differentiation based in ethnicity is, as this example suggests, one of many useful techniques for differentiating products and markets, and it conforms with other ways in which difference functions in the workplace (see also Rieff 1993).

In short, 'difference' has entered into the reorganization of capitalism in several crucial ways, and this in turn shapes its entry into social theory. These changes in capitalism are also accompanied by changes in the nature of nation-states, only now beginning to become apparent. They might include replacing a presumption of internal uniformity with a presumption that 'diversity' is normal within states. Such a shift would necessarily mean an end to the 'homogenizing projects' referred to in my summary of Williams, above, as well as diminished salience for 'national' symbols as instruments of political legitimacy (see Verdery 1993). Changes of this kind would have far-reaching implications for ethnicity and for our study of it.

Although it is too soon to tell how these processes will play themselves out from one place to another, it seems clear from what is going on in the United States that a central aspect of the contemporary construction of 'difference' is a 'new essentialism': the positing of difference of all kinds as inherent and imperative. Gendered styles

in the workplace are seen as inherently 'male' or 'female', learning styles in the classroom as differing inherently by race, groups as having cultures that have been distinct from time immemorial. Peoples' identities are becoming more irrevocable: one 'is' Latino, African-American, Native American, despite whatever admixtures one may have. American university admissions and recruitment committees talk behind closed doors about 'pure-blood' minorities. These ideas are contested, of course: by feminists who argue that there is no such thing as a universal 'women's standpoint' and that it is politically retrograde to think there is; by the odd member of a 'Diversity' committee who protests. The implicit racializing that lies behind this kind of talk; and by those who challenge Afro-centric arguments that only a person of African origin can teach about Africa (or, more broadly, by challenges to any argument that sees essentialized identities as implying a single politics).⁴

Let me illustrate both this 'new essentialism' and its link to changing capitalism with some quotes from a publication that is the self-declared 'bible' of my own university's 'Diversity' office:

For the purposes of this discussion we will define *primary dimensions of diversity* as those immutable human differences that are inborn and/or that exert an important impact on our early socialization and an ongoing impact throughout our lives. (...) Listed in alphabetical order, they are: (1) Age. (2) Ethnicity. (3) Gender. (4) Physical abilities/qualities. (5) Race. (6) Sexual/affectional orientation. (...) There is no escaping the lifelong impact of these six core dimensions (Loden & Rosener 1991:19)

The authors then go on to talk about 'secondary dimensions of diversity', which, unlike the primary dimensions, are 'mutable differences that we acquire, discard, and/or modify throughout our lives' (ibid.). They include things like education, income, marital status, religious beliefs, etcetera. I think it is clear from this passage what I mean by the 'new essentialism'. And here is how the authors see its connection to changes in the global economy:

At a time in our history when we are desperately seeking ways to increase America's competitiveness (...), it is ironic that employee diversity remains a largely untapped resource in most

public and private institutions. Instead of recognizing the value of diversity as a competitive advantage, diversity continues to be stifled and ignored (...). Yet, the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity are becoming more visible in the American workplace and the marketplace. As this continues to occur in the future, it will be those organizations that learn to manage employee diversity (...) that will benefit the most and those that refuse to let go of assimilation as a strategy (...) that will ultimately lose. Like dinosaurs unable to adapt to a changing environment, they will be doomed to extinction (ibid.:35).

Note here the presumption that *heterogeneity* (rather than homogeneity) is (or should be) normal. This is what I mean in suggesting, above, that contemporary changes in the nature of states, if they follow the demands of the capitalist workplace, may entail a diminution of Williams's 'homogenizing projects'.

What has all this to do with Barth and *Ethnic groups and boundaries*? Barth was theorizing 'difference' in another era, before the current round of capitalist reorganization was in full swing. In the present context, his anti-essentialist insights suddenly have a political relevance that to my mind is more important than any of their limitations: his demonstration that identities are not necessarily essential and fixed, that they are situational, that what counts are boundaries rather than their content, that ethnicity is first and foremost a form of organizing social life rather than an inborn characteristic. Despite my suggestion above that real-world state-making processes may have undermined 'situationalism' in some places, I think it is preferable by far to emphasize situationalism, invention, and boundaries over content, rather than to play to the new racism and sexism implicit in much identity politics. For scholars and critics, at least, it is deeply useful to be reminded that ethnicity is, above all, not inherent in nature but a socially determined principle of organizing social life, one whose functioning we ought to examine critically in the present as social orders worldwide are being transformed. To observe this is to underscore the fact that theory is always also politics, potentially affecting the world as well as describing it.

These insights must be used with caution, however, for even if we might see the essentialism of identity politics as misguided, their

consequences are more ambiguous.⁵ From the form these politics have taken so far, it is clear that they have the potential to empower at least some members of historically disadvantaged groups to a greater degree than before. Native Americans, for example, who in arguing for the repatriation of ancestral bones employ an essentializing concept of ethnicity that a Barthian anthropology would criticize, may have found in this essentialism a powerful political lever. Some Latinos may improve their socio-economic position through a multiculturalism whose racializing tendencies are otherwise deeply suspect. From the point of view of empowering disadvantaged groups, scholars in a 'Barthian mode' who challenge 'ethnic culture' as arbitrary and invented, or who refuse to consider identities as imperative, risk undermining political possibilities that might have progressive social effects. Similarly, there is much to be said for developments that normalize heterogeneity, as long (I would say) as the price is not a new racism.

The questions to which we are led by the line of argument I have been developing are questions of great intellectual, social and political importance. In my judgment, then, those of us who now study ethnicity face the task, both challenging and urgent, of investigating the systemic causes and implications of the *new* 'new ethnicity' – a phenomenon inextricably entwined with gender, race, class, capitalism and changing forms of state power – and of pursuing that investigation with a constant awareness that our theories, too, participate in it.

Notes

Acknowledgment: My thanks to Laura Oaks for her comments on this essay.

1. Laura Oaks (personal communication) argues that even this possibility may be disappearing in the present world of global communications and high-technology media, which increasingly preclude the notion of 'stranger', since media stereotypes come to override individual identities. In a sense, one 'knows' something about even those whom one has never before encountered – thus, such people cannot be totally strangers.
2. This process of ethnicity emerging from nation-building finds its extreme in the present 'transnational' world in which people bearing preconstituted national identities migrate elsewhere and 'become' ethnic groups whose home nations remain durably in their self-conception and political behaviour. Benedict Anderson calls this the 'ethnicization of existing nationalities' practising 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992:11).
3. This point directly recapitulates what I suggested in my discussion of situationalism.

4. A different kind of example of 'new essentialism' is the way that *possessing culture* as an essential trait has become the requirement of citizenship in some of the new nations of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – such as Croatia, where prospective citizens must have a certain ability in the Croatian language and the Latin alphabet, or else they will not be 'naturalized'.
5. One might also wish to argue that from the point of view of anthropology in the field of disciplines, a Barthian critique of multiculturalism is risky. To see identity politics as misguided and as resting on unacceptably essentialist foundations could serve to marginalize anthropology, as its message is seen to obstruct developments that are backed by powerful forces in the world economy. In an era when disciplinary identities and boundaries (and their associated resources) have become as evanescent as in the most fluid ethnic systems, such marginalization should not to be considered lightly.

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Boundaries of consciousness, consciousness of boundaries

Critical questions for anthropology

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This year is the twenty fifth anniversary of the publication of Barth's celebrated symposium, *Ethnic groups and boundaries*.¹ It would be difficult to overstate the influence which this book, and especially Barth's Introduction to it, has had on the anthropological study of ethnicity in general, and of ethnic identity in particular. I do not think it is an exaggeration to suggest that Barth gave the definitive nudge to the reconceptualisation of ethnicity as delineating a field more general, more subtle, and certainly more cultural than that of 'race relations', the specialism which had preceded it. In British social anthropology, hints of the likely trajectory of this revision might have been discerned earlier in the work of some members of the Manchester School and of their unlikely bedfellow, Edmund Leach. However, the more immediately obvious influences on Barth were American, especially in the traditions of social psychology and symbolic interactionism running from the Chicago School and G.H. Mead, in a continuous line to Goffman (see Paine 1974). Barth took ethnicity out of its social structural closet, and located it firmly in the realms of the interactional, the transactional and the symbolic. We may well quarrel with the theoretical trajectory of the transformation in the subject; but it seems to me undeniable that he does bear a major share of the credit for this intellectually liberating paradigm shift.

Needless to say, he was not alone in reconceptualising as social *process* what had previously been treated as structural. As we know,

Barth's 'transactionalism' was roughly coincident with a range of exchange-theoretic approaches, with an increasing concern with issues of social identity; and, most significantly with the manifest incapacity of pluralist political systems and pluralist sociology and political science to explain the transformation in the politics of identity which emerged during the 1960's. The rhetorics of equalisation and assimilation, whether applied to race, gender, ethnicity or aboriginality, were increasingly revealed as toothless, insensitive and as the effusions of the powerful. Writing about the local exploitation of Harajans, Berreman noted that it is dangerous to hold a tiger by the tail: it is likely to bite back (1973:23). Increasingly, from the 1960's onwards, the tigers snapped at their tormentors. Identities, solutions and definitions proposed by the powerful for the powerless, or for the less powerful, have been rejected. The mythical consensus of the past has been succeeded by a charged sectarianism in which putative inferiority is inverted to become an assertive declaration of superiority or of exclusivity, a reaction which Barth himself noted in his essay (1969:33).

This change of stance might be seen as the rejection of identities and postures which were felt to have been imposed by others, the rejection of an ideology which did not address the consciousness of the group thereby defined. The consequent change in the *anthropology* of ethnicity had similarly to move from a position in which it took consciousness for granted or neglected it, to one in which it made consciousness problematic. We devised systems for constructing other people's consciousness, without enquiring too closely into their veracity. This is my point of departure from the Barth of 1969. In *Models of social organisation*, he had proffered a model which limited consciousness to a calculation of costs and benefits and of relative advantage. In *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, he made this calculus operate on the ethnic boundary on which social groups engage with each other. They attempt to maximise the advantage, or to minimise the disadvantage, which they expect to accrue to them by taking the role of the collective other, and presenting their ethnic identity accordingly. Ethnic identity is modulated by the perceived pragmatics

of interaction. So, for example, in Eidheim's classic paper in Barth's volume, when they are in the company of Norwegians, the Saami react to their stigmatisation by attempting to mute their Saaminess and to pass for Norwegians. But when they are in the Saami backstage area, they revert to their authentic ethnicity. It was a more than plausible story.

What then should we make of the observation made by Saami informants to Robert Paine that, 'There'd be no stigma if Eidheim hadn't invented it!' (Paine 1991:27)? We have to assume that these people were accusing Eidheim of an unwitting fiction. But, if guilty, Eidheim was hardly alone, for anthropology has continuously ducked the most difficult task of eliciting consciousness, either by inventing it, by declaring it to be too difficult, by deriving it from social structure, or by the preposterous denial of consciousness to cultural others, while still insisting on it for ourselves. We have done this in all areas of social life, not just in ethnic interaction, whether inventing the meanings which other people supposedly find in symbols, in cock fights, in ritual and ceremonial, or in art.

What seems to me most bizarre is that we have dared to do this for collectivities when we have simultaneously declined to concern ourselves with the individual and with self consciousness. I think this is the nub of our error. For example, to revert to Barth's contention that ethnicity was invoked to mark the boundary between a group and its significant other, this would seem to rest on the unsatisfactory assumption that ethnicity is simply generalised to the members of a group, and is not implicated in their self perceptions other than as bearers of a given ethnic identity. By treating ethnicity as a tactical posture, this ignores both self consciousness and the symbolic expression of ethnic identity. When I consult myself about who I am, this entails something more than the rather negative reflection on 'who I am *not*'. It is a matter of autobiography: of things I know about myself, of the person I believe myself to be. It is the *symbolic* expression of ethnicity which renders it multivocal. If I identify myself as Saami rather than as Norwegian I do not necessarily mean to suggest that I am just like every other Saami. I do not have to sublimate

myself in an anonymising 'Saaminess' in order to suggest that Saami have something significant in common which distinguishes them from Norwegians. But because ethnic identity is expressed symbolically, it is possible for this internal diversity to be preserved, even while it is masked by common symbolic forms.

Thus, by a somewhat different route, I arrive at a conclusion which may seem to be similar to Barth's: ethnicity has a definite appearance, but rather indefinite substance. But so far as I am concerned, indefinite means just that, rather than 'insubstantial'. It is simultaneously indefinite and substantial because it is informed by self experience and self consciousness.

This same discrimination of appearance from reality, of substance from insubstantiality, is pertinent to the related idea of 'boundary'. This most topical of terms, or the entity to which it refers, seems to have preoccupied the social sciences since the late 1980's and the collapse of the central European state socialist empires. In the attempt to shed some conceptual light on a categorical morass, the political scientist Malcolm Anderson distinguishes between 'frontier', 'boundary' and 'border'.

Frontier is the word with the widest meaning. (...) In contemporary usage, it can mean the precise line at which jurisdictions meet, usually demarcated on the ground with posts, stones or fences and controlled by customs, police and military personnel. Frontier can also refer to a region (...). Even more broadly, frontier is used in specific cases to refer to the vast interior of a continent (...). The term border can be applied to a zone, usually a narrow one, or it can be the line of demarcation (...). The word boundary is always used to refer to the line of delimitation or demarcation and is thus the narrowest of the three terms. (n.d.:7, fn. 14; see also Anderson 1982).

His usage is similar to that proposed by Coakley:

Political geographers conventionally distinguish between *boundaries*, which have a precise, linear quality, and *frontiers*, which have more diffuse, zonal connotations. The concept of frontier has a broader social significance than the more restrictive legal concept of boundary (1982:36).

And Prescott, another geographer, agrees:

'Boundary refers to a line, but *frontier* refers to a zone' (1987:13).

The confusions among these words, all of which express the condition of contiguity, are those of ordinary usage rather than of science. It might be helpful to think less in terms of discriminating among them on the grounds of their putative referents – since ordinary language will not honour such precision – than in terms of how they are used and what they are used for. In the discourse of anthropology, such a taxonomy of concepts and attitudes (rather than of concrete empirical referents) would suggest almost the opposite of Anderson's and Coakley's surveys: that 'boundary' is the word with the most general application (since, in anthropology, it has been used to signify such diverse things); whereas border seems situationally specific, and frontier has come to be reserved to fairly strictly limited geo-political and legal applications. The distinction can be accomplished simply by regarding frontiers and borders as matters of fact; whereas boundaries are the subjects of claim based on a perception by at least one of the parties of certain features – diacritical features – which distinguish it from others. Whether it refers to a collective condition, such as ethnic group identity, or to something as ephemeral as 'personal space', boundary suggests contestability, and is predicated on consciousness of a diacritical property.

Anthropologists and other social scientists who write about ethnicity are inclined to credit the concept of boundary to Barth, and, by implication, to associate it with ethnicity (or, as in the subtitle of Barth's book, with the social organisation of cultural difference). But the concept is really much more fundamental to the discipline and to the nature of our enquiry. When anthropologists defined the subject as the study of other cultures, they necessarily (if unwittingly) placed 'boundary' at the very centre of their concerns. The relativism of anthropologist/anthropologised, us/them, self/other, clearly implies boundary. Malinowski was aware of this, in a way, although perhaps not to the extent of the rather less ethnocentric Evans-Pritchard, who was clearly sensitive to the problems of moving cognitively across boundaries. He recognised that the languages of

either side could not be regarded as simply equivalent to each other, since they were born of incongruent cultures. Nevertheless, he did see it as a problem of translation, which could only be settled by invoking the device of relativism.

The problem became fixed as one inhering in the distance between *cultures* rather than between *minds*. Anthropology has been preoccupied with the boundaries between cultures. It has preferred to avoid the boundaries between minds, between consciousnesses, because, ironically enough, these are seen as being too difficult to cross (Needham 1981). This more fundamental problem has been shoved aside simply by predicating consciousness on culture, which is itself anthropologically constructed as being different from, and therefore 'relative to' *other* cultures. In doing this, anthropologists merely replicate the lay practice of cultural exaggeration which Boon saw as both the *raison d'être* and necessary condition for culture (1982).

One consequence of this has been that anthropologists have been largely content to assume the existence and integrity of collective boundaries, such as those of ethnicity. Rather than questioning their existence, or questioning the extent to which they might reasonably be generalised (*whose* boundaries are they?) they have been concerned almost exclusively with the ways in which boundaries are marked. There have been significant theoretical debates concerning the differences among the ways in which they have done this, and concerning the nature of the boundary marking devices and processes which they have attributed to people. But there is little room for doubt that their concern has not extended to the more fundamental question. It has been so central an ethnographic preoccupation that examples would be somewhat gratuitous, but to give just an idea of their range: it could be found among Leach's 'aesthetic frills', those non-technical aspects of ritual which express collective identity by emphasising cultural possession. It was explicitly at the heart of Schwartz's depiction of the 'ethnognomic' activities of Admiralty Islanders (1975). It provided the material for the reformulation of migrant West Indian identities among the Notting Hill carnival participants described by Abner Cohen (1980; 1992). It is the handle on

which Kapferer hangs the ethos of 'mateship', of egalitarianism, by which, in his view, Australians measured themselves against the hierarchical Brits (1988).

So ubiquitous has this kind of work been, especially in studies of ethnicity and social identity, that we have taken for granted the integrity of its central concerns: to show how individuals are constructed in the images of their collective representations. It has imputed boundary-consciousness to people without pausing to enquire quite what it is of which they are supposed to be conscious. Appadurai has recently argued that boundary-consciousness in the form of 'the production of locality' may be contrived and constrained by operating within the matrices of global forms – which, however, do not necessarily diminish their localness (1993). This notion of the commoditisation of local identity, and of the boundary as its referent, may be useful. But it still does not ask of what the individual is conscious when she or he invokes a boundary as a means or source of social identity? Culture and consciousness are not alternative modalities: culture is only manifest as consciousness. In the ethnographic literature, people have been constructed in terms of putative boundaries (ethnic or local), and in terms of anthropologists' consciousness of boundaries, without adequately interrogating these notions.

This is clearly a criticism which could be made generally of anthropology, and not just of its specialised attention to boundary. However, I suggested earlier that the concept of boundary must be regarded as central to anthropology, precisely because it addresses the essence of our task: to extend our own limited consciousness in order to comprehend another's. The centrality of this concern to the subject makes the discrimination of 'boundary' from cognate terms more than a matter of semantic nicety. The terms 'frontier' and 'border' (and boundary, if it is not distinguished from them) alerts us to lines which mark the extent of contiguous societies, or to meeting points between supposedly discrete social groups. We have barely glanced at those more amorphous divisions which appear routinely, not just between cultures nor even within them, but between intimates who share culture. As I have suggested, we have shied away from, have

even denied any interest in, the boundedness of the mind, the limits of consciousness which separate one self from another. We have excused ourselves from such an enquiry on the grounds that it would be too difficult, and that our concept of culture enables us to invent people as being similar to each other. Instead of dealing with the individual, we have restrained our ambition and addressed ourselves instead to whole societies or to substantial parts of them. Yet, looking at individuals' boundary transformations may alert us to the qualitative nature of collective boundaries.

This is really the point of my paper: that looking at the boundaries of selfhood *must* sensitise us to qualities of bounded collectivities which we otherwise miss. In the attempt to make this point, I will wander back and forth between boundaries of selfhood and collectivity to test the integrity of our use of the boundary concept. My proposition is that if it does not accommodate the consciousness of the individual, then, notwithstanding the power of a *conscience collective*, it must fail also to overcome its fictional character at the collective, ethnic level.

May I to try to illustrate this briefly with reference to rituals of initiation. In dealing with ritualised status passage, we do not seem commonly to have explicitly applied the concept of boundary to divisions between statuses, but there is no reason why we should not do so. We have the evocative notion of liminality to describe the blurriness of transformation, and the acute consciousness of status on either side of it. This is not unlike the exaggerated concern with social identity to be found commonly in geo-political borderlands (e.g. Sahlins 1989; Brown 1990), and to which I shall return. But the difficulties of passing from status to status seem curiously understated in ethnographic accounts – as if such adjustments were as unambiguous as (albeit more troublesome than) crossing a national border: one moment you are in Spain, the next in France. The worst you are likely to suffer is a brief spell in no-man's land. So it is with accounts of initiation. One day the initiate is a child; the next he or she is initiated and, after due process of seclusion, reemerges into society bearing the new status of adult, or initiated youth, or marriageable girl. The

confusion of liminality, the blurriness of being 'betwixt and between', or being in the social equivalent of no-man's land, is somehow confined temporally by the ritual process and spatially to the initiates' lodge. It is ended by the next ritual phase of re-aggregation.

This seems hardly plausible to me. Transformations of status, like crossing geopolitical borders, require a process of adjustment, of rethinking, which goes beyond the didactic procedures about which we have been told so much. They require a reformulation of self which is more fundamental than admission to items of lore, or being loaded with new rights and obligations. The difficulties inherent in such self-adjustment may vary according to the nature of the frontiers which are crossed but our experience of politics and travel should also alert us to the deceptively innocuous character of crossing between supposedly proximate statuses or cultures. The first intimation to us that we are *really* in a different place may be the look of incomprehension on the faces of our interlocutors, or the pained censure by others of our newly inappropriate behaviour. Having crossed a boundary, we have to think ourselves into our transformed identity which is far more subtle, far more individualised than its predication on status.

An exemplary account of initiation which, exceptionally, does try to make the distinction between the *sociology* of the rite of passage and its *meaning* or *experience* to those who undergo it is Fitz John Porter Poole's (1982) harrowing account of male initiation among the Bimin-Kuskusmin of the West Sepik province of Papua New Guinea, not far removed, incidentally, from the Bakhtaman. He describes in detail the *ais am*, the first stage of the initiation cycle which may be spread out over fifteen years. Poole is explicitly concerned to distinguish the socially impressionable 'person' from the experiential 'self'. The object of the ritual is to make such an impact on the individual through the sheer intensity of experience that the two are brought into conjunction.

The transformation is accomplished by physical deprivations of such severity that they cause both physical and stress-related illness. Poole argues that it is not only the personhood, the sociological

profile of the boys, which is changed, but their very selfhood: they are intended to perceive a change in themselves. The ritual makes its impact on them through experience: the more intense the experience, the greater the impact; and it is this, he suggests, rather than gratuitous cruelty, which explains the devastating nature of the ordeals they have to endure and the controlled anger which they are intended to feel. The physical traumas, both in fact and in anticipation, are believed to eventuate in a total awareness which fuses all the senses, producing experience which cannot be expressed or put into 'discursive language' (1982:139): it is an awareness of selfhood, and of the self, crystal-like, reflecting outwards.

Poole offers us a rich analysis of a process which is full of symbolic and sociological significance. The ritual is overwhelmingly about gender; but, as one would expect, there are also to be found within it discourses on exchange and descent. If I dwell only on the question of personhood and selfhood, it is not to diminish the importance of other aspects of the complex, but simply to focus on an item which is pertinent to my argument. The distinction which Poole sees the Bimin-Kuskusmin trying to make seems to be between the public definition of the proper person and that person's perception of her/himself fitting into that matrix. He reads the ritual as attempts to make selfhood and personhood focus on identical qualities of the person: stoicism, bravery, emotional control, obedience and discipline, and so on. Thus, rather than seeing person and self as dimensions of the individual which are bound to be in opposition, the Bimin-Kuskusmin try to forestall the opposition. They do so by forcibly impressing on the individual's consciousness the parameters of proper personhood.

I would suggest a revision of Poole's terms of contrast. I see the usefulness of the notion of 'selfhood' as capturing the awareness of a person *as an individual*, as someone who can step back and reflect on his or her position with respect to society. But what appears to be entailed in the distinctly attenuated sort of selfhood which Poole posits as the objective of Bimin-Kuskusmin strategy is a particular mode of consciousness, a consciousness of oneself as a Rimin male.

The term 'consciousness' seems closer to his intention than 'self'. Indeed, his very thesis is that the *ais am* is intended to impress the indigenous ideology of personhood on the boy's consciousness. This may be a useful way of regarding rites of passage generally. I do not suggest that this is all that they accomplish, but that it is one of the things which they may accomplish. It is another dimension to the transformation which ritual effects. By initiation, the status of the individual is changed sociologically: that is to say, the *person* is changed. But also the person as an aware being, as an individual with a mind, a self, is transformed and, clearly, in the *ais am* we must suppose that the consciousness is changed, though whether in quite the way the Bimin suppose is another matter.²

We can surely grant that the *ais am* does present the individual with circumstances and conditions which change him mentally: he learns to despise women, to distrust everyone to value resilience to control anger. But this is not to say very much. Does he learn to think as a Bimin man or just to think some of the same things as other Bimin men? The difference is crucial: the first suggests that his experience of the ritual clones his consciousness; the second, only that it leaves him with some things of which to be conscious. If you accept with me that the latter is more likely – and obviously this can only be a matter of conjecture – then you also have to conclude that we really do not know quite what boundary has been crossed. We may accept that the boy afterwards sees his self and others differently; but is he conscious of this perspective as distinctively Bimin or as distinctively his? We do not know; perhaps we cannot know. But there is no doubt that ethnographers have largely dismissed their uncertainties and opted for the fiction of socially-directed transformation.

A boundary-crossing stimulates the individual's self-reflexivity – just as Roosens suggests that one requires cultural distance in order to perceive one's own culture (1989:150). If we recognise boundaries as matters of consciousness rather than of institutional dictation, we see them as much more amorphous, much more ambiguous, than we otherwise have done. It may be this very ambiguity which inclines societies to invest their various boundaries so heavily with symbolism.

As a matter of ideology, the boundary may be given dogmatic form. But its internalisation in the consciousness of individuals renders it much less definitely. I think perhaps this offers us a clue to the discrimination of boundary, border and frontier. Border and frontier have the quality of finity, definity, about them. When they are crossed, one has definitely moved from the Cerdagne to Cerdanya. That is undeniable, for my passport stamp tells me so. What is much less certain is what this crossing-point means to those who live on either side of it. The uncertainty may be glossed by language, currency, by law, lore and by all the iconography of custom and tradition. But, when all this is said and done, it remains a gloss on the much more ambiguous boundaries of consciousness. Borders and frontiers seem to me to have something in common with the taxonomic absoluteness of anthropological categories; boundaries, with the blurriness and elusiveness of symbols.

Of course it follows that if one does not know quite what it is that has been crossed, then one may also be unaware *that* a boundary has been crossed at all. As an English person resident in Scotland, I feel an intolerant dismay at the insensitivity of many incoming English people to the notion that in Scotland they are actually in a different place. No doubt we all have examples from our field experience of people who fall over their idiomatic feet because of their cultural boundary errors, and this kind of insensitivity or clumsiness is also readily observable among those crossing unfamiliar status boundaries. Again, the examples are legion and perhaps do not need to be cited to make the elementary proposition that, as objective referents of meaning (as opposed to political legitimacy) boundaries are essentially contestable, while borders are not.

In an intriguing examination of Canadian fiction writing, Russell Brown has showed how central the border is to Canadian identity. Actually, his claim is more ambitious: '[The] border is central to Canada's *self-awareness*' (1990:32). There is a difficulty with this claim: countries are not self-aware; people are. If he is saying that the border is significant in individuals' awareness of themselves as being Canadian that is fine. But if he is saying that in so far as individuals

are aware of themselves it is *as* Canadians because the border looms so large, I would have to regard this with some scepticism; and as a failure to appreciate the complexity of self-identity. In a country composed of such heterogeneity, the 'significant others' are almost numberless.³

Brown points to the ubiquity of oppositions as a theme in Canadian literature, but it does not need a structuralist to point out that there is nothing peculiarly Canadian, nor even 'border-ish', about this. Any anthropologist with experience of peripheral societies, or of societies in which boundaries are heavily invested symbolically, would have made similar observations – but not because of the border: the border is a social fact. Whether or not it signifies difference is a matter of social construction, and is more properly thought of as one of boundary. If border is fact, boundary is consciousness, and the difference between them is crucial. Brown muddies my waters by talking about border-consciousness: living on the border-line, on the edge, 'Canada's fear of being overwhelmed by American culture and values' (*ibid.*:44).⁴

I beg indulgence for suggesting a distinction the significance of which I can only assert but not demonstrate. There is a difference between being conscious of what is on either side of a border, and being preoccupied with the boundary as such. The first, again, implies definiteness: if I go this way, I will be X; if I go that way, Y. The latter seems to me more authentically boundary-conscious: liminal, aware that one is walking a risky line, but not knowing whether one risks falling up or down or what one might fall into. If this sounds unduly cryptic, I would say that it is this kind of uncertainty which drives people to grasp for certainty, and which in turn motivates identity. This may be formulated around a collective stereotype or dogma, such as 'Canada's self-awareness'. Or, it may proceed the other way around by assimilating such cultural products to self-experience. Writing with respect to the Cerdagne/Cerdanya border, and following Benedict Anderson, Sahlin says that national identity,

... appeared less as a result of state intentions than from the local process of adopting and appropriating the nation without abandoning local interests, a local sense of place, or a local identity (1989:9; see also *ibid.*:269-270).

Historically, anthropology has privileged the collective and dogmatic and neglected the individual and experiential, as a consequence of its general neglect of selfhood and selfconsciousness. As a result, we have failed to get to grips with the meanings of boundaries. Instead, we have invented them as meaningful. Because of our Durkheimian intellectual inheritance, we have felt compelled to do this for collectivities, without discomfort. But the extent of our misreading of collectivities is indicated by the difficulty we have in discerning meaningful personal boundaries.

Consider, for example, some recent work on Japan, a culture area to which some anthropologists have even denied the concept of selfhood. In her study of craftsmen, Kondo argues that it is a fallacy to see individuality as being predicated on a cultural model of selfhood (1990). There may well be cultural values which are associated with the achievement of certain statuses – for example, skilled artisanship – but these do not determine the composition of selfhood. They are among the qualities from which individuals craft their selves; and, indeed, apprenticeship to these crafts may well be seen as contributing to the enhancement of selfhood as well as to the acquisition of a skilled trade. But she shows that, far from conforming to a cultural matrix, the craftsmen construct selves which are complex, multifaceted, and informed by their perception of what is required in specific situations.

In a lucid exegesis of the elementary structures of Japanese selfhood, Takie Lebra (1992) argues that particular value is accorded to a selfhood which is so highly individualised, so impervious to social pressures, that it might be thought of as autonomous and even asocial. She identifies three dimensions of the self, of which the *least* valued (ibid.:117) is the social or 'interactional'. This is the 'face-sensitive' self, tuned to the responses of others with whom it strives for empathy and sympathy. The highest order of selfhood, she suggests, is the 'boundless self', which amounts really to selflessness. Founded on a Buddhist transcendentalism this collapses the boundaries between self and other, between subject and object, and is thus neither contingent nor absolute. It seems to me that it may be more

appropriate to think of this as a highly idealised state of being, akin to Turner's *communitas*, an ideal which is the object of aspiration but rarely, if ever, of achievement.

Between these high and low orders of selfhood, Lebra locates the 'inner self', *kokoro*, identified with the heart or chest (in contrast to the face and mouth, loci of the interactional self). It is morally superior to the social self precisely because of its resistance to social pressure, its absoluteness. There is the strong implication that *kokoro* is the test of personal integrity, representing the ascendancy of the spirit over matter.

Curiously, Ohnuki-Tierney completely ignores the notion of *kokoro* and the proposition of an inner or autonomous self (nor does she even refer to Lebra). To the contrary, she insists that the Japanese self, both at the levels of the collectivity and the individual

... is constructed in a dialogic relation to the other – other individuals – in a given social context (1990:207). [I]n the Japanese conception, the self, individual or collective, is defined always in relation to the other (ibid.:198).

Far from acknowledging the existence or importance of an asocial dimension of the self, she says that the Japanese

'vision of society does not consist of atomized individuals [but] of interdependent individuals' (ibid.:207).

She goes so far as to use the term 'non-self' for 'the self without the other' (ibid.:208), and it is clear that she does not have the higher-order, transcendental self in mind, but simply an impossible conception. I am bound to say that I distrust her version of the self, not least because she tries to make it do too much work. Rather than an inquiry into the self as such, she is concerned with it as one among a number of tropes which she sees as indicative of the imitative and refractive impulse in Japanese culture, and assimilates it to her more general examination of dualisms and oppositions. Thus, *she* constructs the self as contingent and ephemeral (see also Ohnuki-Tierney 1991), but then imputes her own version to Japanese as such. The

three-level hierarchical self which Lebra outlines seems both more substantial and more convincing in its complexity.

These three dimensions of selfhood are embedded in a cultural vocabulary which is shared and transactable among the Japanese, although presumably subject to similar divergences of meaning and use as is the English of Nigel Rapport's Wanet villagers (1993). But the actual construction of selves is clearly not generalisable: it is in the minds (or, more literally, the chests, stomachs, faces and mouths) of individuals to whom the boundaries of selfhood are not adequately expressed by those of Japan or of any other collectivities to which they may claim membership.

Boundaries are zones for reflection: on who one is; on who others are. There is no axiomatic rule which stipulates that the boundaries of selfhood are less significant in this regard than are those of collectivity. The subordination of self to society is achieved by power. Within the boundary zone self-contemplation does not merely refract the presence of the other, but also expresses the *kokoro*, the inner self, the non-contingent identity. But if we may grant the existence of collective ideas of self-identity, even if as no more than aggregations or lowest common denominator expressions of individuals' thoughts, they may also be considered as having a similarly introspective character to those of the individual.

There is a real challenge to the practice of anthropology here. I have argued that we, and social scientists generally, have invented selves in the image of the generalisation 'culture': that to do otherwise was regarded either as improper or as too difficult. But we have also invented cultures and ethnicities by seeing them as reflexes of a boundary encounter: culture as a more or less self-conscious differentiation from a contiguous group; culture or ethnicity as 'playing the vis-à-vis' (Boon 1982); or, as in Barth's 1969 version, as modulating itself to the requirements of contingent social interaction and boundary transaction. If there is an absoluteness in self-identity, so also is there in collective identity. Anne Salmond has argued powerfully against the use of an easy relativism to understand the impact on

Maori of their encounter with Europeans. Rather than bouncing their selves off the *pakeha*,

‘In Maori epistemologies, the knowing self is constituted in relationship with ancestors and kinsfolk’ (1993:22).

The Maori reference is not to the other (even if it may be occasioned by contact with the other) but to themselves in the genealogical guise of their forebears and descent groups. She insists that the contingency model, the assumption that selfhood is constituted entirely by Lebra’s ‘interactional’ dimension, is a device of occidentalism which denies equality to the other. Her argument expresses for collectivities what mine attempts for individuals. Anthropological practice has created the Other as Object:

For objects have these negative properties in Western thought – they cannot speak, they cannot think, and they cannot know. “Objectivity” creates an immediate epistemological privilege for the “observer” – only he/she can truly know (ibid.:18).

By this means, we provided ourselves with the justification for neglecting ‘their own experience of the world’ (ibid.), just as we have ignored self perceptions. We cannot understand cultural boundaries without coming to terms with the discourse they enclose. We cannot do that without sensitivity to the claims and perceptions of those individuals who constitute the discourse.

It does not matter whether we use the political scientists’ and geographers’ taxonomies of border concepts or our own, so long as we do make the distinction between barriers in jurisdictional fact and in the mind. We must do this in order not to fall prey to the comfortable assumption that the nationalities or ethnicities on either side of a dividing line are co-extensive with discrete cultures which themselves dominate and are replicated through the behaviour of individuals. The meaning of the division is to be sought in the consciousness of those who are oriented to it, not in some abstracted collectivity. Unless we recognise the power and persuasiveness of such boundary consciousness, we cannot begin to understand the

attraction of ethnicity, nationhood or any other collectivity which claims distinctiveness for itself.

Historically, anthropology has privileged the collective and dogmatic and neglected the individual and experiential, as a consequence of its general neglect of selfhood and self-consciousness. It is a neglect which requires repair if we are really to get to grips with the meanings of boundaries. Sahlins argues that national identity – the meaningful appropriation of a national boundary to a locality – is accomplished through the medium of local experience. I agree, and have long argued the same point both with respect to national and local identity (Cohen 1982), and to locality and individuality (Cohen 1986). But if national identity rests on its substantiation by local or ethnic consciousness, then the same logic suggests that sub-national (or non-national) identities – local, ethnic, religious or whatever are informed and substantiated through individual consciousnesses. The ethnic group is an aggregate of selves each of whom produces ethnicity for itself. What these various productions have in common may well be more a matter of formal appearance than of meaningful reality. It is the self's consciousness which has primacy in the creation of ethnicity, in rendering boundaries meaningful, in the interpretation of ethnic identity. This self consciousness is the obvious point at which to begin.

Notes

1. Earlier versions of this lecture were given to the seminar *Borders and boundaries* held at the University of Oxford by the Royal Anthropological Institute's Committee on Biological and Social Anthropology (January, 1993), and organised by Dr. Helen Macbeth; to the symposium, *Antropología de la frontera*, held in Formigal by the Universidad Internacional Menéndez y Pelayo (September 1993), and organised by Professor Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana; and to the Department of Anthropology, University College, London (November 1993). I am most grateful to all the participants, as well as to others who have read drafts, for their comments: in particular, Malcolm Anderson, José Antonio Fernández de Rota, Bruce Kapferer, Murray Last, Robert Layton, Carmelo Lisón, Howard Morphy and Charles Stewart. I also gratefully acknowledge Anne Salmond's permission to quote from her paper to the 1993 Decennial Conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists. Parts of this paper appear in my book, *Self consciousness: an alternative anthropology of identity*, Routledge, 1994; and in special issue of *Revista de Antropología social* edited by Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana.

2. Bloch recently advanced the proposition that, apart from rehearsing a kind of nonempirical fantasy on the nature of society, the process of initiation rituals (like that of all religious experience) accomplishes a sociological transformation as well, linking the individual and mortal initiate into the transcendental and eternal values of society. It turns the consumable into consumer, 'prey into hunter' (1992). Bloch wishes to show that, and how, all social process is informed by the same basic logic, and to portray this structural homology as a universal feature of human societies. Apart from being curiously atavistic, this argument still implies that we can come no closer to individual consciousness than to assume that it is modelled by and on this organising social logic, one which may not even have the virtue of existing in the indigenous collective consciousness (as Geertz asserts for the Balinese cockfight), but which is the contrived product of comparative analysis – not just of initiation rituals, but of everything!
3. Mordechai Richler puts this with his customary panache: 'Canada is not so much a country as a holding tank filled with the disgruntled progeny of defeated peoples. French Canadians consumed by self-pity; the descendants of Scots who fled the Duke of Cumberland; Irish the famine; and Jews the Black Hundreds. Then there are the peasants from the Ukraine, Poland, Italy and Greece, convenient to grow wheat and dig out the ore and swing the hammers and run the restaurants, but otherwise to be kept in their place. Most of us are still huddled tight to the border, looking into the candy-store window, scared by the Americans on one side and the bush on the other. And now that we are here, prospering, we do our damn best to exclude more ill-bred newcomers, because they remind us of our own mean origins in the drapers shop in Inverness or the *shtetl* or the bog' (Richler 1991:367).
4. In Tom Wilson's terms (1993), this would be better described as 'consciousness of The Border'.

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The primordial nature of origins in migrant ethnicity

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The broader context of research and interpretation

Before developing my view on migrant ethnicity, I will sketch the underlying conception of this research.

I consider fieldwork by objectifying participation to be the first step and cornerstone of medium-range-theory-building (Jenkins 1986). Being moderately 'realist' (Hammersley 1992), I am convinced that one is able to reach something which is 'out there'. I also consider fieldwork as being a useful way of bringing out 'native voices'. However, although these 'native voices' are indispensable, they need a context for them to be understood. Although they may *express* their socio-cultural space with full competence, they are not necessarily able to provide an *explanation* or *elucidation*. On these topics I fully agree with a recent article by Hastrup (1993).

A second step in the study of 'migration and ethnicity' is the establishment of a wide research context, both in social space and time. A wide stage as outlined in Glazer & Moynihan (1975), Gellner (1983) or Portes & Rumbaut (1990), even with all its shortcomings, is very revealing. In order to explain, for example, why it is that small groups like the First Peoples of Canada or Native Americans receive some response after centuries of crying in the dark, one must highlight the relevance of the worldwide reaction against the Holocaust after World War II and the battles fought in the process of decolonization.

These have created, at least in public discourse, a new sort of international ethics: that every people has the right to exist; that all human beings have a certain number of inalienable rights, and that there should be international recognition of some type of basic equality among human beings and groups. Another precious contribution to the debate is the insight that the democratic welfare state is eliciting the formation of pressure groups, and that ethnic groups are very strategic in a state which is officially anti-racist.

More specifically, diachronic anthropological research in the field of ethnicity (Verdery 1983; Pauwels 1985; Stallaert 1993) seems particularly rewarding, as it unfolds the evolving structuring throughout time of 'things ethnic', throwing more light on what is often called the mythical character of ethnicity, ethnicism and nationalism. At a shorter range, it offers a view of these processes as they evolve from the generation of the parents (the migrants in the strict sense of the term) to that of their children, who migrated when they were very young or who were born in the immigration country. This longer time perspective, which also forces a broadening of the social space one is considering (Cammaert 1985; Leman 1987; Hermans 1992) – the process of migration involving at least two different places – offers a better and more complete insight into migration and return migration and the dynamics of ethnic relations, both in the country of origin and in the state of immigration.

Comparison across cultures (Horowitz 1985) is another enriching technique allowing an escape from localism and presentism.

Some theoretical reflections

As Barth's theory (1969) is widely known and has been selected as the baseline for our evaluation of the anthropology of ethnicity, I will begin with Barth's 1969 model in order to develop my ideas.

According to our Leuven experience, Barth's boundary concept is working very well in research fields as diverse as Aymara history, Huron ethnic revival and immigration in Brussels (Roosens 1989). All the empirical studies undertaken by members of our Leuven team since 1974 have confirmed that the construction of a social boundary

between ethnic entities is best conceived as a process, and that, very often, auto- and/or hetero-attribution of cultural traits is subject-bound, situational and related to implicit or explicit negotiation. I sincerely think that the boundary paradigm should be used further, fine-tuned and adapted to the various historical situations which can differ widely.

However, the migration perspective, perhaps more than the situations in which groups have been interacting for many years, brings out a serious theoretical problem concerning the link between the concepts of 'boundary' and 'ethnic group', and the relationship between 'boundary' and 'ethnic identity' as analytical tools. I shall consider the second problem first.

The auto- or hetero-attribution of a so-called culture item or a combination of items to a category or a group of people does not give them an 'ethnic identity' per se. Self- or hetero-attribution of a number of cultural traits does not create or contribute to the establishment of 'ethnic identity', unless one presupposes that the group of people to whom the traits are already attributed is an ethnic group, displaying, by definition, a certain persistence in time. In Barth's model, potential duration and 'substance' are provided for by the social act of intentional self-ascription to a group, and by defining the ethnic group as a 'social' – not a cultural – 'vessel'. But this theoretical model is not specific enough: many religious and linguistic groups (*la Francophonie*) are also social vessels requiring acts of self-ascription, and also these types of groups do keep their boundaries up. What, in my view makes an ethnic group specific, is the genealogical dimension, which unavoidably refers to the origin, and always involves some form of kinship or family metaphor. To be sure, 'origins' do figure in Barth's landmark contribution, but, in our view, this notion has not been elaborated on or given an adequate place in the model, since the distinction between culture and ethnic group has absorbed all the attention.

The reference to origin is, without being an indispensable human trait, the primary source of ethnicity which makes a *socio-cultural* boundary into an *ethnic* boundary. The construction of a boundary

does not constitute identity, nor its ethnic nature *ipso facto*: it can only express, add to, play down, etcetera an ethnic identity which is already there, flowing from another source. If one does not include this first source of ethnicity in the boundary paradigm, the notion of 'ethnic identity' is unavoidably smuggled back into play as another version of the uncritical 'substance' – providing badly-needed consistency to the theoretical representation of the 'group' – a notion which had been purged with the rejection of the naive and substantial concept of culture. 'Ethnic identity', then, if used in an uncritical fashion, could well be nothing more than a naive folk concept, feeding the illusion that an 'entity' which has duration and specificity is produced by auto- and hetero-ascription of ethnic markers, or, what boils down to the same thing, by boundary production.

If one wishes to consider and use 'ethnic identity' as a strictly analytical tool within the framework of Barth's theory, it can only have the meaning of 'a number of culture traits attributed to someone'. But in that case, 'ethnic identity' becomes a redundant notion, merely a synonym for 'ethnic boundary', or a synonym for a part of its content.

In a more conventional sense in the human sciences, and especially in psychology, 'identity' implies consistency through time. It is exactly this persistence that Barth uses to reject the notion of culture as the diacriticon for an ethnic group: many ethnic groups stay the same through time, while their culture changes. It would be impossible then to define an ethnic group by its 'objective' culture content.

From my perspective, ethnic identity can best be defined as a feeling of belonging and continuity-in-being (staying the same person(s) through time) resulting from an act of self-ascription, and/or ascription by others, to a group of people who claim both common ancestry and a common cultural tradition (Hutnik 1991). Ethnic identity can take its drive and pattern from an interplay of oppositions with outsiders, but it mostly combines this source of differentiation with an internal source of identification. One of these two sources can be more important than the other, depending upon historical circumstances and situations.

If ethnic identity was merely the sum or a combination of the results of segmentary boundary maintenance in a geographical zone where many nations or *ethnies* are interacting, it might be too complex to survive or even be generated (Roosens 1993b). I agree that it can be useful to interview a target group of subjects about the way they classify different ethnic and/or phenotypical kinds of people (Hagendoorn 1993). But to consider the sum or the combination of the implicit or explicit self-markers the subjects use in opposing themselves to different ethnic populations in terms of 'us' and 'them' as being their ethnic identity, would be more of an artifact resulting from a questionnaire, than a description of the feeling of continuity (identity) expressed by the individuals.

In other words, some dimensions of ethnic identity, without being essential to human beings, are both logically and ontologically prior to any form of boundary between an 'us' and a specified, concrete 'them'. In other terms, the 'us' we oppose to the 'them' in the other camp, and which becomes an 'ethnic we', was never a simple 'us': it was already 'ethnic' from the 'inside'. A common origin and a general, undefined 'them' or 'other' is all that is required.

However, in my view, to identify through one's origin is no more of a natural or unescapable act than to constitute and maintain ethnic boundaries. Popular genealogy and image building of the remote past are also constructions, using historical elements and myths in a selective and sometimes convenient way, quite similar to the process of boundary creation. They could even be considered as the result of an imagined interaction between today's ethnic members and those of the past.

Unlike boundaries, which make people different from each other and maintain ethnic division, origins, inversely, make people identical within the same group, creating and maintaining ethnicity from the inside. A minimal reference to outsiders in general – to those who do not belong – and thus, to a boundary in general, suffices to make the conception of an in-group possible. Concrete interaction with a specific out-group is not required, for the same reason as being and feeling a member of a kin group does not necessarily imply a strong opposition with neighbouring families.

Just as there is a relative functional independence between 'etic' or 'objectifiable' culture and ethnic group formation, a similar independence is revealed between ethnic boundary and ethnic identity. Ethnic identity has other sources than just ethnic boundaries. These references to the origin deserve a place of their own in research and theory formation. They cannot be dealt with adequately by just mentioning or even stressing that ethnicity, ethnicism and nationalism have to do with a mythological origin; or that there is an 'emotional' side to ethnicity (Glazer & Moynihan 1975). Moreover, these aspects are not given enough room if they are only considered as 'cultural elements' functioning as constituent parts of a 'social boundary' which emerges from interaction. The family-origin metaphor ('belonging to an ethnic group is like being rooted in a family') should be explored further and exploited, just as the boundary-metaphor has until now. This is not merely a question of focusing on the psychological side of ethnicity (De Vos & Romanucci-Ross 1975; Epstein 1978), but also of researching the mytho-historical, societal (Horowitz 1985) and symbolic expressions of origin in the field of the family metaphor.

Of course, I fully realize that wherever distance between human beings is created, maintained or organized, the boundary metaphor can be used as a heuristic device. I simply state that in a number of situations which develop from migration, the family metaphor referring to the origin may be a useful complementary tool to capture specific phenomena, which are difficult or impossible to catch with the boundary metaphor.

Ethnic identity is not only formed with respect to boundaries or by self-attribution or allo-attribution of culture traits, but also with respect to genealogical representation. This kinship-and-family metaphorisation, in which folk biology of reproduction is involved, is perceived by the actors as something palpable and real as it passes through concrete ascendant, collateral and descendant persons, embedded in kinship and family relations. At least in the present historical situation, the genealogical dimension of ethnic belonging seems to be perceived by the actors as more invariable, more stable, more context-independent and more relevant than cultural differences.

Self-definition in terms of origin is another way of standing and staying apart in a position from where a boundary with the surrounding entities may develop. What is found inside the boundary, namely, what one is and what one possesses as a specific social category, cannot be reduced to being the product of boundary formation. One could say that the feeling of continuity, or identity, comes logically first, and that this identity originates from genealogy 'before' it has anything to do with boundaries.

The kinship and family connections not only establish an ethnic link with the ascendent generations, but also with the descendant ones, with the migrant children and grandchildren who grew up in the immigration country. Parents fear that they will 'lose' their children: that their children will not continue the life of the parents and their ascendents; that they will become western, turn a-religious, no longer respect the basic values of life. This fear is most apparent among Muslim immigrants, hailing from North-Africa and Turkey.

It should be clear from the above, that one can develop a similar argument about the link between the terms 'boundary' and 'ethnic group'. It is not the boundary by itself that makes the group 'ethnic'.

In what follows, I will attempt to elaborate further on the theoretical reflections and to present and analyze some phenomena which ground and illustrate the approach of the Leuven research group.

The obsessive locus of origin among newcomers

The backbone of immigrant ethnic networks and groups established in Brussels among whom the members of our Leuven team conducted their research, seems to be kinship and family, and the feeling of continuity over the generations, which goes with it. Although there is a lot of construction involved in folk genealogy, the family metaphor which is used in constituting the ethnic category or group begins with the 'real' kin, palpable human beings who are as close as human beings can be. The closeness of kin relations seems to be widespread and quasi universal (Harris 1990). Kin and family feelings are projected on the ethnonation. Thus, ethnic

identity is not simply the socio-psychological result or 'content' of an ethnic boundary.

The overwhelming majority of immigrants proper (often called 'the first generation'), be from Spain, Italy, Turkey or Morocco, all keep their 'home' family network and local community as their first and most important social space of reference. They left their folks behind, often a painful experience. As migration very soon developed into chain migration, family relations or local community relations in the country of origin and in the country of immigration became vital and instrumental. The same is true for the first period the newcomers spend in the country of destination, where they are given shelter, advice and support by their kin and former neighbours. Immigrants tend to stick together, even if they have been dispersed in a systematic way by the authorities upon entry in the immigration country, as the United States experience shows (Portes & Rumbaut 1990). They form networks and neighbourhoods in the country of immigration.

A massive amount of evidence in the literature on migration indicates that many members of the first generation visit their home country frequently, make phone calls, send money, invest their savings in apartments or homes and grounds in their village or region of origin.

Whether they are active and conscious members, or only self-aware members of ethnic or ethnonational categories or groups, their membership originates in, and refers to the region, community, or any other instance of origin. Even after more than thirty years in Antwerp, for example, Spanish immigrants relate and associate among themselves, as Andalusians, Catalans, etcetera. These Spanish migrants in Antwerp, studied by a member of our team (A. Martin), kept aloof in a very conscious way from Belgian politics. In their relations with Belgians and people from other backgrounds, they were labelled 'Spanish' or 'Spaniards'. From their side, they reacted by assuming this label passively, using it for identification when asked by authorities or people they did not know personally. 'Spanish' was their official, public identity. They even produced some 'state-national' markers to contrast themselves with Flemings, such as the 'fact' that the Spanish always show more warmth in their relationships with their fellow

humans; that they care much more about their children and other family members; that they create more 'ambiente', and combine friendship with instrumental relations. But their 'Spanish' state-national identity was something which popped up when elicited, in their discussions with Belgians. Their social networks and free associations, in which they spent most of their spare time, only had meaning if they were related to the ethnonational divisions and relations as they operated in the State of origin (Roosens & Martin 1992).

Feelings, social relations, and financial and emotional investments did not have much to do with the oppositional thinking or feelings vis-à-vis the natives, nor with any social boundary between Spaniards and Belgians. None of the Spaniards with whom we have been working spoke more than a few words of Flemish, and interaction with Belgians outside the instrumental field of the job was virtually nil, even after more than thirty years. As a network, a category or a group of people, the Spaniards were living in a segregated way, fully focusing on the region of origin and the local Spanish immigrant community of their own kind. If there was any ethnic or ethnonational heat, it was to be found at the real or imagined boundaries between the ethnonational groups in the country of origin, and in their transposed miniature replica on Belgian soil. The dormant state of the Spanish-Belgian boundary in Antwerp is confirmed by the positive feelings expressed about 'the Spaniards': they are considered to be strangers of the good type, who have 'adapted very well', and who are no longer spontaneously talked about as migrants. In the eyes of the natives, the true migrants are the Turks and the Moroccans.

What is really out there in the city of Brussels or in the Flemish area in terms of relationships between the natives and the allochthons, cannot be highlighted or understood if one neglects to study the ways, and particularly the intensity of the ways in which the allochthons identify with their ethnic, ethnoregional or ethnonational groups of origin. Kurds in Brussels, for example, cause riots when the Turkish prime minister visits the capital; communities of Turks and Kurds manifest signs of mutual hostility in the province of Limburg; international meetings of Muslim fundamentalists prohibited in the country of origin take place

on Belgian soil; 'conservative' Turks of Antwerp fly back to their country of origin in order to vote and contribute to the transformation of Turkey into a genuine Muslim country. All sorts of 'ethnicist' and 'fundamentalist' activities which have to do with the home countries take place in the country of immigration under the nose of local ignorant authorities (Dassetto & Bastenier 1988). All these facts, which directly imply continuity in ethnic belonging and roots in the country of origin, are impossible to describe or analyze in terms of ethnic boundaries or interaction. Why most immigrant Turks, Moroccans or Spaniards do not even consider naturalization and 'want to stay what they are', co-determines their relations with the Belgians, as well as the degree of their segregation. It would be extremely farfetched to interpret all these phenomena in terms of interaction between the groups, networks and categories of people who are co-present on Belgian soil, and I am sure nobody intends to do so.

A very similar situation can be found in the Walloon area, the southern, French speaking part of the country, where the Italians are also seen as examples of 'good adaptation', and where almost all free associations either have nothing to do with being 'ethnically active', or, if they do, relate to the region of origin in Italy (Martiniello 1993). Ethnic interactive play can have its main source in the country of immigration, but it can also take place at a distance, in the state one has left behind. The social space of the migrants includes the place where they come from.

Well-to-do expatriates, hailing from the United States or Japan, who stay for only three to five years, but are nevertheless perceived by the natives as foreigners, may not care at all about maintaining ethnonational boundaries, although they are well aware of their 'foreign' origin. They know that their stay abroad is fully warranted, that they will be protected by their company or firm and will return home untouched in the near future (Pang, forthcoming).

In these different cases, what one is ethnically or ethnonationally has much more to do with origin than with boundaries in the country of immigration. The 'big-family metaphor', based upon common origin, is a better tool with which to understand the situation than

the boundary metaphor, although ethnic boundaries do exist and are of course relevant topics of study. In my opinion the two ways of viewing the issue must be combined.

If one sees the problem only in terms of the boundary metaphor, one could easily miss still other relevant ethnic phenomena. In some cases, for example, in which native ethnonationalism is forcefully expressed in native voting behaviour, we have certain knowledge that a very significant number of people who voted in favour of expelling the non-EU strangers never directly interacted in a significant way with these strangers (Billiet et al. 1990). In very many cases there is no face-to-face relationship at all. The ethnonational 'us' of these people as they express it is much more than just the result of an opposition to the 'them' of the migrants. This appears quite clearly when they comment on their voting behaviour in interviews or discussions, or when they celebrate their own ethnic belonging, their own nation, at public meetings, such as, for example, the IJzerbedevaart in Diksmuide, Flanders, which takes place every summer. What is highlighted at these occasions has to do almost exclusively with their history as a people and with their mythological origin and belonging. The past, the future and the virtues of the 'big family' are what counts, not what originates from external interaction. Opposition to other similar groups constitutes only a background. In these cases, (symbolic) interaction is mainly with the past of the nation, with those who died for it, and with those who are going to carry the flag in the next generation. It would be farfetched to interpret all these expressions of nationhood in terms of interaction over some form of boundary with other, similar 'peoples'. Reading the facts in terms of ethnic identity related to origin is more revealing.

Moreover, some patterns of migrant culture which function as ethnic markers and elements of an ethnic boundary do so only in a secondary fashion: their primary meaning and function is to be understood from the perspective of the relationship between the migrants and their homeland or own immigrant communities. Field research clearly shows that migrants are dropping numerous culture traits of their country of origin in order to gain or maintain

employment, or to make money as small entrepreneurs in the country of immigration. However, to remain acceptable as a member of their family or kinship in their own immigrant community, and as a member of the community of origin, the overwhelming majority of immigrants have to respect some specific norms which are considered to be basic. This certainly applies to migrants hailing from the Mediterranean countries. Achievements in the field of career or business, which are major motives in migration, are of no use if one is no longer accepted as an honourable member of one's community of origin. In order to convert 'modern' goods and money gained from migration into social assets providing social status and social promotion in their home country and in their own migrant community, migrants must continue to be recognized as decent and honourable people by traditional standards. Thus, social promotion demands loyalty to a number of traditional culture traits which demarcate the immigrants from the surrounding native majorities. Paradoxically, to be successful in terms of 'modern' achievement, one has to stay 'traditional' in various values and practices. In many instances, the cultural traits which are considered to be really important concern kinship and the family. Among Mediterranean and especially Muslim migrants, many of these values relate to sexuality, reproduction, protecting one's exclusive rights of reproduction, purity and integrity of the body, etc. These values and meanings easily transfer to ethnic belonging in terms of genealogy.

For this discussion it is important to underline that these culture traits are not freely created in interaction with the majority or with other surrounding (ethnic) groups. Nor are they randomly selected ethnic markers. They immediately refer to the country and group of origin and to the own migrant community or network, and are strong means by which to stick together as part of a 'we' with a common origin. Those who do not honour this heritage lose honour themselves and are socially expelled.

However, some of these culture traits, which are perceived as compelling moral or religious rules by most actors and are required in order to maintain the ties with the home community, may begin,

a posteriori, to function as ethnic distinctive features, distinguishing the migrants from the natives at both sides of the social boundary in an interactive way. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that these traits reproduce ethnic belonging before having been selected in any interaction with oppositional social categories or groups in the country of immigration.

I fully concede, however, that in every identification leading to ethnic identity, some minimal representation of *people who do not belong* – outsiders – is implied. But these outsiders could be *imagined* in a very general, 'symbolic' way. A vague image of strangers-some-where-out-there is all that is needed. The 'them' which is opposed to the 'us' can be a very general one, not physically present at all. The 'them' could be the rest of the world, just as when some Japanese nationalists proclaim Japan as being 'Number One' at their celebrations. Or when some leading Japanese circles politely state that 'homogeneity' belongs to the very essence of their culture, and hence, that the Japanese are not inclined to let in allochthons as immigrants, the 'them' is represented as very real, and even menacing, but remains general and vague at the same time.

Hetero-ascribed origins

The construction and imagination of origins and their maintenance in the hearts of the allochthons is an undeniable fact. And so are the fantasies of the native media, political discourse and public opinion about the kind of places and peoples from where immigrants might hail. Origins as seen by the natives are important, for they determine the basic, encompassing status ascribed to the various groups of newcomers.

At this particular time, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks and Portuguese in Brussels, who twenty years ago were perceived as guest workers or migrants coming from the rather underdeveloped, lazy South, are no longer classified in this way. It is a widespread and fashionable trend to overlook their presence in the migration debate, or, if referring to them, to see them as Europeans with a Christian background, as opposed to the 'totally different' Moroccans and Turks who are from

Muslim stock. They are no longer seen as problematic (Roosens et al. 1993). These days, their visibility in the media is nil. Their identity as 'guest workers' or 'migrants' has been eroded over the last ten years with the widely publicized unification of Europe. However, recent empirical studies show that the first generation of EU-immigrants, just as non-EU migrant workers, have not given up their regional, ethnic or national self-identification with reference to their State of origin. But the Belgians do no longer care or do not even know. And even if they did, their reactions would be futile, as Europe guarantees to all its citizens the right to remain what they are. At present, only Turks and Moroccans are the 'true migrants'.

Well-to-do foreigners, such as the personnel of EU institutions, are rarely mentioned in public discussions or in the media. The same applies to other higher-class or higher-middle-class foreigners who are not of EU origin, like the Japanese (Pang: forthcoming) or US Americans. The very fact that the presence of these residents raises house prices and may negatively influence the use of native languages, especially of Flemish in the Brussels area, reaches the media from time to time, but has never been a hotly debated issue. Only a small pressure group of the Flemish Brussels elite tries to limit this overwhelming foreign influence. The Belgian hetero-definitions of these categories in terms of nationality or ethnicity of these categories are very general and vague.

This contrasts with the classification of the working-class aliens from Morocco and Turkey who entered the country as guest workers. To begin with, these non-European newcomers are placed together in one encompassing category: 'the migrants'. This category has even been defined with scholarly precision in the writings of the Royal Commissioner for Migration, who militates on their behalf. The same category is also used, but in a derogatory way, by those who want to send 'the migrants' back home. In the population at large, the category 'migrants' is associated with 'problems': problems of street crime, burglary, social security milking, Islamic fundamentalism, discrimination against women, traffic in drugs, urban housing deterioration, cultural uprooting and anomy, etc. The image of 'the migrants' has

certainly not improved with the ongoing struggle against illegal immigration. Non-European immigrants hailing from countries where Islam is the dominant religion are also often described as Muslims, and again, grouped in one and the same category without further specification. In certain contexts or under certain conditions, natives do distinguish between 'Moroccans' and 'Turks'. Official nationality and country of origin are used as diacritica.

How 'the Moroccans' or 'the Turks' or 'the Muslims' see, feel or define themselves, however, is not taken into account. Only a few professional natives are aware of the fact that 'the Muslims' are sharply internally divided; that the Berbers of Morocco do not want to be mixed up with Moroccan Arabs, and that various ethnic and regional categories and groups do exist and remain very much alive among the immigrants of the first generation. These realities are veiled by the fact that in their relationship with the native administration, people hailing from Morocco have been forced to identify as 'Moroccans' or 'Muslims'. Gradually, these categories gained some social and psychological consistency, also on the migrants' side.

Moreover, local nativistic movements and organizations, such as the *Vlaams Blok* in Flanders and Brussels, picture and publicize a overdrawn, over-organized native 'peoplehood', and evoke an image of groups of non-European aliens with an equally strong profile, with whom it is impossible to live together within the framework of one and the same state. Cultural, and especially religious differences are represented as absolute and almost natural. Thousands of flyers have been sent to sons and daughters of Muslim migrants, telling them in friendly terms that if they are ever accepted, they will always remain second class citizens, and that their chances to become fully-fledged human beings are much higher in their country of origin, where they really belong.

The facts are different. Generally, the members of 'the first generation', from their side, are not interested in establishing a sort of colony on foreign soil; their coming has nothing to do with a victorious invasion. Migrants are not looking for conflict at all. For the most part they are extremely scared of being sent back to their country of origin

before they are able to make the money they hope for. From their side, there is no assertive demonstration of opposition.

Thus, an asymmetrical ethnic or ethnonational boundary between the allochthons and the autochthons is constructed, beginning with the stereotypes and fantasies of the origins of the newcomers which are found mainly among the natives. It was the natives who started the game in terms of 'national', 'ethnic', 'cultural' and 'religious' opposition. Historically, the 'first generation' of immigrants have never been interested in that kind of interaction. They saw themselves as people who wanted to make as much money in the shortest time possible in order to return home, where they would figure as successful middle class people in their region and family of origin. They were no match for local extreme nationalists. In a certain way, the ethnic boundary builders, those developing an opposition with the natives in terms of a 'We'-with-our-own-culture-and-ancestry versus 'Them', were absent from the immigrants' camp.

Both newcomers and natives use their own imagination and produce their own constructions. This dualistic, segregating, juxtaposing human space allows for the co-existence in one city of groups with mutual misperceptions of the ethnic climate and the nature of ethnic realities in the other camps. Spaniards of Antwerp are seen as very well integrated, in contrast to the Moroccans, while, after thirty years, they are still fully oriented to their region of origin and their family at home and do not speak the language of the region of immigration. Incoming Turkish or Moroccan migrants on the other hand, who just try to make it financially and have no intention whatsoever of becoming a political grouping within the Belgian system, are frequently ethnicized or described as fundamentalists.

Sons and daughters of migrants

The situation is different with the grown-up children of the migrants. Here, the boundary dynamics do come into play fully. In the social circles of these young people who have been born, raised and educated in the immigration country, ties with family in the home

country and the metaphorisation of the family, as well as with the culture of origin, have been heavily diluted. This is why these youngsters tend to react with ethnic boundary formation that is oppositional and counter-cultural, creating so-called 'secondary culture' within the state of their parents' immigration. In this way, they are quite similar to ethnic minorities in the United States, where this phenomenon is widespread and general (Ogbu & Gibson 1991; Schlesinger 1992; Roosens 1993a).

In native discourse, these sons and daughters of migrants are also classified as 'migrants' or 'migrant youngsters', even if they are born in the country of immigration and have never moved. The members of this younger generation, assume the label 'Moroccan', 'Turk' and 'Muslim' without further qualification when interacting with the natives, but increasingly object to being called 'migrants'. They stress the fact that they were born in the host country and that they intend to make a living in that part of the world. Paradoxically, these youngsters, and more particularly their emerging leaders, voice and stress their 'own culture', 'identity', 'cultural identity' and 'ethnic' or 'national identity' in a much more marked way than their parents. Much to the puzzlement of the natives, they claim voting rights, the right to cling to their own culture and religion, the right to define their own culture and how they will fit into the State where they are living, without asking for, or even declining naturalization (Islamitisch 1993). On the contrary, they assertively express that they want to remain what they are. And if these youngsters do ask for and obtain naturalization, they stress that they are only 'changing their papers' for pure technical and instrumental reasons, in order to avoid deportation and to get more job opportunities. Their Belgian identity is merely a question of documents. In all other fields they do not want to identify with the local population.

The overwhelming majority of the natives resent this 'refusal to adapt' or to 'integrate'. In their eyes it is inconceivable to combine permanent residency with 'non-integration'. In the feelings of the natives, territory, nationality, filiation, language and culture are, and must be strongly associated and congruent. This has been a predominant view among

the native population, certainly in Belgium, where the debates about federalization have been particularly tense in the last decades, and the political struggle between the two main 'communities' particularly violent.

Empirical field research shows that local groups and individuals may show considerable differences, and this applies especially to the migrants' sons and daughters (Roosens 1992). One form of ethnic identity, for example, may be combined with very different types of 'etic' culture within the same community, especially among youngsters born in the immigration country. Thus, a number of various ethnicity-patterns may co-exist in one single ethnic minority group living in one and the same town, city or area (Roosens & Martin 1992). Although all the youngsters in our Spanish Antwerp community, for example, were living in an almost identical social setting, and all strongly identified themselves as Spanish and had never considered naturalization, at least four different ways of relating to the Belgian and Spanish worlds became apparent. Some youngsters were strictly Spain-oriented, while others enjoyed their 'bicultural' position; still others suffered from cultural ambiguities and conflict; and a last category of young people were feeling very close to their Belgian peers and were strongly Belgium-oriented, culturally. Socially, all four categories entertained friendship with local youngsters or with other immigrant youth.

'Big family' and racism

When the boundary approach is combined with the ethnic-identity-family metaphor, we are also better equipped to explain today's racism than if we consider racism to be a peculiar form of inter-ethnic conflict which tends to occur when phenotypical traits are used as elements of an ethnic boundary.

The 'family view' of ethnic groups easily turns into racist perception: in racism too, human physique and 'blood' are also involved in folk genealogy. Within extremist groups, some sons and daughters of Nazi collaborators wish to restore the memory, or the still living figure of their parents, especially now that the communist regimes

have collapsed – sure proof that their parents were right. People with this background often constitute the driving force of extreme nativistic movements or extreme rightist parties.

If 'nationalists' stress the genealogical dimensions of their ethnic belonging, racist feelings of superiority are close at hand. Both genealogy and racism operate using the body and its specificities in a quite literal way as an undeniable reality. Seen over time, generations move more slowly than most characteristics of socio-cultural space, and this gives them the appearance of solid ground. Genealogical self-representation also provides feelings of integrity which should be defended against outside polluting aggressors. 'Proud' ethnicity easily turns into outright racism.

Going back to the origin

Origin-related ethnic identity also provides useful tools with which to view remigration. The first generation of immigrants frequently develop an idealized image of their country and region of origin, and tend to stick to this image, even if it no longer matches the living reality they meet when visiting. Moreover, new, 'modern' values and practices which have recently developed in the country of origin are rejected by many immigrants of the first generation. Migrant culture is, then, at least in some cases, bound to remain more traditional than the culture of the region of origin. This creates a bizarre relationship between migrants and those who stayed behind.

In quite a large number of cases, migrants who return for good are not welcomed by their fellow-nationals or co-members of their ethnic group. This social rejection is experienced as painful. Particularly when the natives who stayed behind had to endure difficult times in order to improve their socio-economic situation, returners are resented as disloyal people who fled their community and nation when their presence and efforts were badly needed. They are seen as people who return home when the battle is over, and this is clearly the case in various regions of Spain. Returners are refused full social membership of the ethnic group or nation.

Although these cases of rejection by the 'folks at home' are widely known in the migration networks and communities abroad, idealization of the region of origin does not seem to diminish. In most cases, people do not give up their locus of origin just because they are no longer fully accepted by the natives of the emigration country. 'Home' is not only the spot where the fruits – often the bitter fruits – of the emigration story should be fully valued and social promotion obtained; it is also the place of the final return, the home where one really belongs. On this issue, there is no difference between the feelings of the migrants and the proclamation of extreme right activists who want to send the migrants home, back to their 'natural' setting. The feeling of continuity with the past, within a family tradition, seems highly valued. This same idea of continuity dominates the feelings one develops with respect to one's children.

It is also striking that quite a few sons and daughters of migrants, born in the immigration country, badly want to 'return' to 'their country of origin' once they become adults, even if they are socio-economically and culturally well inserted into the host country. They have the impression that if they stay in the host country they will never feel like fully-grown human beings, always remaining in-betweens. They also fear that their children would have to suffer from the same socio-psychological identity diffusion (Stallaert 1992).

Remarkably enough, even when they are accepted in the urban centres of their home country and become well integrated, many young returners are not able to abide by the 'backward' or 'medieval' practices or values which prevail in their homeland. A number of these young people tend to stick to the values of the foreign country in which they were raised, and eventually return. Others migrate elsewhere and take on the roll of cosmopolitans, transcending ethnic and national divisions (Stallaert 1992).

Concluding remarks

The origin of a group, expressed by means of the family metaphor and involving popular genealogy, without being an 'essential' or indispensable human trait is, as far as we can see, the primary source

of ethnicity, and, in this sense, is constitutive of the ethnic character of a group and its ethnic boundaries. While defining oneself as a people in terms of boundaries is unavoidably divisive, feeling as one people, or thinking or talking about oneself as a people in terms of origin need not be markedly oppositional.

The combination of the origin metaphor with the boundary metaphor allows for a more complete elucidation of the polyvalent character of ethnicity. Ethnicity can stress division and opposition in mankind, but not necessarily. It always involves a form of 'standing-on-its-own' and thus of independence, and of being distinct from others, but this being-a-people need not unavoidably be defined in opposition to specific, concrete outsiders. References to a common origin and a vague 'non-we' suffice. A group of people can think and feel about their past, and celebrate their common origin without necessarily stressing ethnic exclusion. This is why ethnicity can be represented as a pacific, 'natural' form of social organization which does not necessarily lead to hostility, just as having different parents does not unavoidably turn neighbours into rivals. A myth about common origin in a distant past can even unify ethnic or ethnonational groups, without dissolving their distinct ethnic identities, as the movement for Flemish-Dutch unification illustrates.

It may be the case, however, and it often obtains in times of tension and conflict, that ethnic identity takes on an aggressive form in opposing other specific, similar groups. In this situation, ethnic boundaries come to the fore and are of crucial importance in understanding and explaining what happens.

Of course, origins can also be used to construct and feed opposition, and may even provide the best fuel for aggression, since they bring into play emotional and existential self-representations of both groups and individuals by drawing on the family metaphor.

What has been said about ethnic groups or categories can also apply to nation-states founded on an ideology of 'common blood', *jus sanguinis*. In my view, their societal and psychological construction and functioning are identical (Smith 1986), though they may display additional, history-related characteristics (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm

1993). Nations with a republican type ideology and founded in *jus solis* may be considered to belong to a different type of organization, although neither the family metaphor nor that of 'common blood' are ever far away, especially in times of war, when this common blood is spilt and sacrificed in fighting the enemy.

Note

I would like to thank my colleagues Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen for their very useful remarks on the first draft of the present contribution.

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We can hardly imagine social theories and political developments these days without the notion of ethnicity. Yet it is only since the sixties that ethnicity was validated as a separate and independent concept within the social sciences. Twenty-five years after the publication of Barth's **Ethnic groups and boundaries**, one of the most influential writings on the subject, this book raises the issue of what has been accomplished in the study of ethnicity since then.

At the conference **The anthropology of ethnicity** (Amsterdam, December 1993), this was the central question, which was addressed by Fredrik Barth himself, as well as by Katherine Verdery, Anthony Cohen and Eugene Roossens in their keynote lectures.

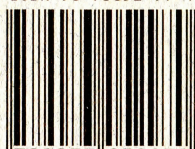
After focusing on what is still useful in Barth's work for today's ethnic issues, the authors discuss the new directions that should be taken, covering a wide range of subjects such as the relation between ethnicity, nationalism and the state, the study of collective and individual consciousness, and the genealogical dimensions of ethnic identity.

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This publication is the result of a cooperation between Het Spinhuis Publishers, IMES and SISWO.

Het Spinhuis Publishers

ISBN 90-73052-97-1



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